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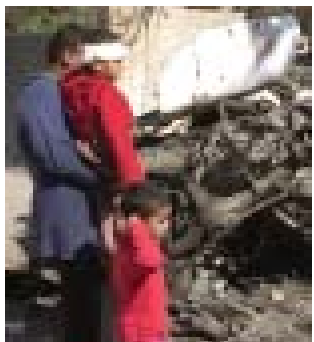
INSIDE



Cancelled Flights

Five U.S.-bound flights from Britain and France were canceled Saturday because of security concerns. The U.S. government said it had fresh indications of al-Qaida's continued interest in targeting commercial planes flying to the United States.

Page 13



US Fatalities

Three U.S. soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division were killed Saturday in a roadside bombing near the northern oil center of Kirkuk. Their deaths brought to 522 the number of American service members who have died since the Iraq war began March 20.

Page 17

VIRTUE OF THE WEEK

Idealism

"Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind... Through them the brightness of your light can be shed upon the whole earth."

— Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 521

See Page 13

Land compensation funds out

CDA, MPLA to release initial money to landowners

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER



EDITH ALEJANDRO

MISS TEEN ASPIRANTS

Miss Teen CNMI 2003 Remylyn Julene Guerrero, with crown, poses with this year's Saipan candidates, who were presented to the public Saturday. They are, from left, Chanel Cabrera, Divana Dela Cruz, Christal Leon Guerrero, Jerbeth De Leon, and Jocelyn Castro. Candidates from Rota and Tinian will be presented at a later date. **Story on Page 5.**

Most ex-SU students are now factory workers

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Former Saipan University students ended up as contract workers, working mostly now in garment factories after the government issued them temporary work authorizations or TWAs.

Left to themselves, the former students are barely making both ends

meet after they were asked to vacate an SU-assigned housing late last month.

Wang Rui, who has served as spokesperson for the group, said he and a friend share a small room in Chalan Kanoa.

He said he could survive because he borrowed \$200 from a former classmate who has found work ahead of him.

Wang, a former electrical firm manager in China, said that he is still

waiting for a prospective employer to call him in. He said, though, that his potential work is not exactly related to his field.

Wang said that as far he knows, most of the 84 former SU students have found work on island. "Most of them are working in garment factory," said Wang.

Wang said they have decided to stay on island pending the resolution of their

See MOST on Page 8

CDA to NMC: Clarify position on Gateway funding

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Development Authority wants Northern Marianas College to be single-minded on which agency it actually wants to deal with for its funding needs for the Pacific Gateway Project.

NMC is currently speaking with at least three local agencies—Marianas Public Lands Trust, NMI Retirement Fund, and the CDA—for interim financing for the project, while also seeking a direct loan with the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development.

"We want to know where they [NMC] are. If NMC wants MPLT or

NMIRF, go ahead. Don't negotiate with more people because it's going to cost government assets. It would require evaluation and this means spending for the project," said CDA board chairman Sixto Igisomar.

He said CDA "is willing to be the last resort."

See CDA on Page 8

Some landowners will finally get their much-awaited compensation this week, possibly beginning today and tomorrow.

CDA board chairman Sixto Igisomar said that he and CDA executive director Mary Lou Ada had signed the request for the first drawdown of the bond money at Bank of Guam last Thursday.

"It should be available by next week," he said after Saturday's board meeting.

Igisomar declined to reveal the initial withdrawal, but sources said that it amounts to some \$5 million.

Igisomar said the initial release should have actually taken place last week but CDA officials were on an urgent trip to Palau.

He said the Marianas Public Lands Authority has already sent CDA a letter asking why its initial request was not acted upon.

"MPLA got frustrated because I was not in town to sign off the request, but that trip to Palau, which required our presence, had been scheduled," he said.

Igisomar and Ada, who were the only CDA officials authorized to sign for the bond money withdrawals, were part of the team that went to Palau last week to

See LAND on Page 8

Dead dolphin found to have fed on seagrass

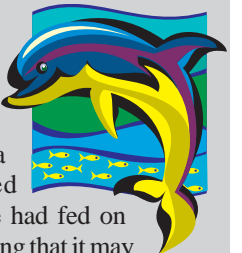
By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Are dolphins on CNMI's waters starving?

An autopsy conducted on a dolphin showed that the creature had fed on seagrass, indicating that it may have had difficulty in catching fish for its prey.

Dolphins are fast-moving aquatic mammals, the jaws of which contain as many as 250 conical teeth. Their teeth are adapted for ripping and tearing prey, not for chewing.

See DEAD on Page 8



Local

Yumul wants meeting with AG on gas prices

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

House Rep. Ray Yumul said yesterday he has begun his research on possibly regulating the local oil industry, amid recent fuel price increases in January.

Yumul said his office is arranging through the Legislative Bureau a meeting with the Attorney General’s Office, which has joined the gas price-monitoring project by the Federal Trade Commission.

Yumul said he wants to meet with the CNMI’s consumer counsel, Assistant Attorney General Brian Caldwell, in connection with the latter’s suggestion for the Legislature to

come up with a divorcement measure in the fuel industry.

According to Caldwell, such measure would prevent the giant oil companies—Mobil and Shell—from owning retail gas stations in the CNMI to protect consumers from the possibility of price gouging.

As of press time, though, Yumul said his effort has been limited to documentary research. He said that House legal counsel Murphy Peterson is arranging his meeting with Caldwell as part of his research work.

Both Mobil and Shell had increased the prices of fuel products by an average of seven cents per gallon. Shell made the first move on Saipan,

implementing the price hike beginning Jan. 14.

Mobil followed shortly, increasing its prices of petroleum products by about four cents per gallon, before raising them again by about three cents a gallon.

Mobil gas stations have pegged the price of unleaded gasoline at \$2.179 per gallon for self-service; premium or “super unleaded” gasoline, \$2.279 per gallon; and diesel, \$2.339 a gallon. Full-service prices are slightly higher, with premium gasoline reaching a price of \$2.459 per gallon. Shell’s retail prices are currently \$2.17 and \$2.27 a gallon for regular and premium gasoline, respectively.

As of last week, the AGO has

yet to receive a complaint from the public about the gas price increases. The AGO said complaints about gas prices could be sent by email to attorneygeneral@saipan.com or in writing to this address: Office of the Attorney General-Civil Division, Caller Box 10007, Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP96950.

Shell had attributed its increase to market forces in Singapore, citing a combination of “extremely strong demand” from Japan and China and “tight supply.”

Shell Marianas president Phil Stalker has assured, though, that the company would roll back fuel prices when market conditions improve and ex-refinery prices ease.

Labor dep’t rules vs firm for delay in submission of transfer request

Although the Department of Labor has decided that a carpenter should leave the CNMI for failing to comply with the 45-day transfer rule, his employer may not lose him after all.

The department also said D&S Construction Inc. could file an application for Loreto F. Cabo to fill in a vacant “replacement position,” provided that the worker leaves the CNMI first.

Hearing officer Jerry Cody affirmed the decision of the Labor director to deny the work

permit application filed by the company on behalf of the worker because it violates the 45-day transfer requirement of the law.

In his ruling issued Friday, Cody noted that Cabo’s last employment expired on June 5, 2003. This made the filing of a transfer application due on July 20 last year. Cody said the construction firm filed the application only on Oct. 22, 2003.

The department allowed Cabo to conditionally transfer to the new employer and begin work.

“Cabo’s transfer application was filed late by three months, rather than by a matter of days or weeks. Given such severe tardiness, the hearing officer is unlikely to even consider granting the transfer application unless the employer is found to be completely at fault and the worker is blameless,” Cody said.

“I believe it would be an abuse of discretion for the hearing office to extend the 45-day transfer deadline mandated by the Commonwealth Legislature by several months, based

merely on a worker’s inability to find work,” he added.

Cody ruled to revoke Cabo’s conditional transfer permit, adding that the worker no longer has valid work status in the CNMI.

Because, however, of the earlier approval of the conditional transfer, Cody ordered the construction firm to shoulder the worker’s repatriation airline ticket. Cody gave the company 15 days to deliver the airline ticket to the department’s enforcement section. *(John Ravelo)*



Veterans of Saipan, Tinian battles sought

Veterans of the World War II battles of Saipan and Tinian will be invited to the commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Battle for Saipan and Tinian to be held June 12-16, 2004 on Saipan.

The Committee for the Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of WWII is soliciting help from newspapers, churches, state and local chapters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Veterans Associations, non-profit organizations, and family members to help identify veterans to be recognized.

Anyone who knows a veteran involved in these battles should send their name and contact information to Jessica Jordan at marianas04-anniversary@yahoo.com, or call (670) 234-7212; fax: (670) 234-7211, or mail: PMB 409 Box 10000 Saipan MP 96950.

For more information about the 60th Anniversary of the Battle for Saipan and Tinian, contact Jordan or visit the website at www.WorldWarII.info.

ASVAB examination set

Attention to individuals 17-34 years old who want to join the U.S. Army.

The U.S. Army Reserve Center in Puerto Rico will be conducting the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery examination on Feb. 27-28.

On Feb. 27, the exam will be conducted at 4:30pm. The next day, Feb. 28, the exam will be held at 12:30pm.

According to a statement from the Reserve Center, joining the U.S. Army will enable anyone to further their education, travel to distant places, obtain valuable training to get a better job, serve the country and the Commonwealth, and get paid at the same time.

“Please sign in early for the test at the US Army Reserve Center, Puerto Rico ‘The Base’ or call 322-6680 and ask for SSG Roberts or Mr. Quitugua,” the statement said.

For more information, call SFC Abadam or SGT Benavente collect at (671) 477-7330/7666.

cosmos
+magenta/
blue

gardenia
+red

11 drainages cleaned up, more to follow

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

At noon yesterday, volunteers engaged in a major cleanup of stormwater drainages on Beach Road sat under the San Jose pavilion, with their clothes drenched from their own sweat. Evidently drained, the volunteers nearly emptied the containers of food provided by House Speaker Benigno R. Fitial.

MOVER president Bonnie Sagana urged the group's members to hang on, as they completed yesterday the third of the eight-

New WMD seminar to train first responders

Another Weapons of Mass Destruction training is being coordinated and scheduled through the combined efforts of the Commonwealth Ports Authority and Emergency Management Office.

Instructors from the National Emergency Response and Rescue Training Center, Texas Engineering Extension Service, and Texas A & M University will be on Saipan to conduct the three-day course on Feb. 10-12 at the Multi-Purpose Building.

This course is specifically designed for first responders Fire/EMS, police officers (police and fire Captains and/or Lieutenants) and hospital medical personnel (EMS On-site Incident Management Team).

This course is free for CNMI First Responders and is fully funded by the Department of Homeland Security, Office for Domestic Preparedness.

The instructors will be bringing state of the art training equipment to conduct hands-on training.

Sundays-long drainage cleanup on Saipan's western shores.

Honorio Cambronero, the president of another non-profit group, KAMPIL, led some members in joining MOVER's cleanup project.

"We also get tired. But if you accomplish something that takes away the exhaustion," said MOVER's Jun Agda, the project manager.

Agda said the volunteers focused on three drainage sites: across the Hakubotan, Moylan's Insurance, and the B&R Auto Shop along Beach Road. The

volunteers not only removed sand that clogged the drainages' mouths, but also trash that included empty beer bottles. They also repainted the facilities.

A total of 56 volunteers from MOVER and KAMPIL joined the morning activity yesterday, bringing to 11 the number of drainages that have been cleaned up up so far. The project covers the cleanup of some 25 drainages from San Antonio to Garapan.

Besides the support of Fitial, MOVER chairman Jun Lapeceros also credited Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente and Pacific Trading Co. Ltd. for the snacks and refreshments. He said the Saipan Grand Hotel also provided sandwiches to volunteers.

Some staff from the Coastal



JOHN RAVELO

Braving the sun's scorching heat, volunteers clean up one of the stormwater drainages on Saipan's western shores.

Resources Management Office, including Environmental Inter- agency Cleanup Operation Team chairman Benny Pangelinan, sup-

ported the volunteers.

The "Drainage Cleanup/Restoration Along Saipan Western Shores," which has been funded by a \$5,000-grant from oil giant Exxon/Mobil, aims to minimize nonpoint source pollution flowing into the beach and to eradicate the uncontrolled growth of algae in the Saipan lagoon.

The project has gained the support of lawmakers, who have vowed to take turns in providing lunch to the volunteers. They include Fitial, Vice Speaker Timothy Villagomez, and Reps. Joe Guerrero, Oscar Babauta, Jesus Lizama, Benjamin Seman, Ramon Tebuteb and Rey Yumul. Pacific Islands Club also offered the volunteers pastries when the project kicked off three Sundays ago.

lottery

triathlon

CDA: No findings yet on Palau Air

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Development Authority board of directors has begun its feasibility study on Palau Micronesia Air following the CNMI’s commitment to invest \$500,000 in the newly established airline.

CDA officials, who flew to Palau last week, said the agency has yet to make a full evaluation of the project.

CDA board chairman Sixto Igisomar, who convened a board meeting Saturday, said the issue is now being handled by a joint panel: the public finance committee headed by member Edwin Hofschneider and the economic development committee headed by Tom Quitugua.

“The board has not fully evaluated the project. We’ll wait for the recommendation by the joint committee,” said Igisomar.

Igisomar said the board, together with CDA executive director Mary Lou Ada, had a “very hectic” three-day visit to Palau as part of the project evaluation.

He said the CDA team met with Palau government leaders led by President Tommy Remengesau, as well as Palau Micronesia Air executives.

He said that CDA will forward its findings to the

Governor’s Office as soon as possible.

The CNMI Legislature earlier approved a joint resolution supporting the release of \$500,000 to PMA. In particular, the Legislature tasked CDA to borrow the money on behalf of the government from a regional bank, Pacific Islands Development Bank. The money would be used to buy 5,000 shares of capital stock from the airline firm.

Under the resolution, the CNMI government will shoulder the loan repayments.

The resolution also listed conditional provisions before the CDA can proceed with the borrowing:

■ CDA must first evaluate the propriety and prudence of borrowing the half-million dollars, and identify where the money to repay the loan would come from.

■ The funding source for the repayment of the loan must be approved by the Legislature through a bill.

■ The legal ownership of the stocks may be vested in the CNMI government or in any of its constituent entities.

■ The Palau government has to first put up the \$1 million it has committed to the new airline firm before the CNMI releases its investment share.

The CNMI government’s half-million-dollar equity investment in the new airline would entitle it to 10 percent of the company’s shares of common stocks and two seats on the firm’s Board of Directors.

Airline president Alan R. Seid said the money is needed to start the company, build the profit margin, and provide a strong reserve for the future.

Palau Micronesia Air is a corporation chartered under the laws of the Republic of Palau. It had issued 50,000 shares of stocks valued at \$100 per share, for a total initial capitalization of \$5 million.

The airline firm has been seeking subscribers for its stocks from among governments and individuals in the region. So far it has obtained commitments for \$1.52 million in initial investment from private sources in Palau and Japan; \$500,000 from the Yapese government; \$1 million commitment from the Palauan government as a portion of Palau’s pending loan from the International Commercial Bank of China (Taiwan); \$500,000 commitment from the Pohnpeian government; and \$600,000 reserved for subscription by people in the region.

Saipan Community School’s honor roll in its 2nd quarter

Grade 6:
“A” Honor Roll – 3.50-3.99 GPA
Adeleyah Mojica
Micaela Demapan
Gyu Ri Kim

“B” Honor Roll – 3.00-3.49 GPA
Do Hee Kim
Kay Park
Lissane Loyola
Isabel Matsunaga
Sayaka Shimizu
Federico Fernandez

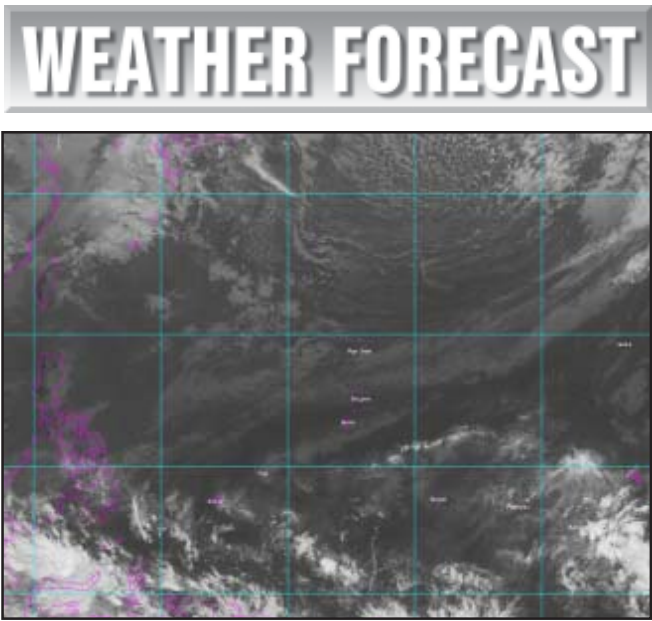
Grade 7:
“A” Honor Roll – 3.50-3.99 GPA
Champ Untalan
Min Sol Kim
Sung Hee An
Rezne Wong
Victoria Bellas

“B” Honor Roll – 3.00-3.49 GPA
J.D. Torres
Seong Bin Lee
Jason Quiblat
Min Joo Jung
Dencio Manglona

Grade 8:
Principal’s List – 4.00 GPA
O’Ronia Sikayun

“A” Honor Roll – 3.50-3.99 GPA
Soo Ji Ha
Soleana Demapan

“B” Honor Roll – 3.00-3.49 GPA
Wen Hui Ye
Vianka Johnson
Nam Hoon Kim
Luis Chung



PICTURE TIME: 1:00 A.M., FEBRUARY 1, 2004
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A near-equatorial trough stretches from near 2n137e to the equator near 152e. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms associated with the trough are located south of Palau and Yap between the Equator and 5n from 130e to 144e. A weak trough of low pressure stretches from 7n167e to the equator near 170e. The trough combined with trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers in the southern Marshall Islands south of Majuro between the Equator and 6n from 167e to 180. A frontal system extends southwestward from near 25n157e to near 18n145e then continues as a shear line to near 14n130e. Extensive low clouds and widespread light showers are occurring along and up to 300 miles north of the boundary. Ahead of this boundary...an area of low clouds with light showers are occurring across the Mariana Islands.

SAIPAN AND TINIAN
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 mph.

GUAM AND ROTA
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 mph.

PALAU
Partly cloudy.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 kt.

POHNPEI
Partly cloudy.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 kt.

YAP AND ULITHI
Partly cloudy.
Winds: Northeast 10-15 kt.

KOSRAE
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15 kt.

CHUUK
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15 kt.

MAJURO
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 15-20 kt.

CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
Auckland	Cloudy	76F (24C)	61F (16C)
Beijing	Rain	45F (7C)	25F (-4C)
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	66F (19C)	59F (15C)
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	83F (28C)	71F (22C)
London, England	Partly Cloudy	52F (11C)	46F (8C)
Los Angeles	Sunny	66F (19C)	44F (7C)
Manila	Partly Cloudy	86F (30C)	68F (20C)
Melbourne	Cloudy	69F (21C)	46F (8C)
Miami	Rain	80F (27C)	64F (18C)
New York City	Sunny	32F (0C)	24F (-4C)
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	42F (6C)	25F (-4C)
Paris	Partly Cloudy	49F (9C)	41F (5C)
Pusan	Partly Cloudy	53F (12C)	38F (3C)
Rome	Cloudy	54F (12C)	45F (7C)
Salem, Oregon	Showers	46F (8C)	38F (3C)
San Francisco	Cloudy	53F (12C)	48F (9C)
Seoul	Cloudy	43F (4C)	25F (-4C)
Tokyo, Japan	Partly Cloudy	42F (6C)	32F (0C)
Washington, DC	Sunny	34F (1C)	24F (-4C)

2004 Miss Teen CNMI candidates presented

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

Give way to the five Saipan candidates vying for the 2004 Miss Teen CNMI crown as they unveiled their plans, dreams, and hopes in joining this year's competition.

The five candidates were presented to the public Saturday at the Multi-Purpose Center, where they took center stage to talk about how they plan to help the CNMI's youths through various community-based activities.

This year's candidates are Divana Dela Cruz, Christal Leon Guerrero, Chanel Cabrera, Jerbeth De Leon, and Jocelyn Castro. Winners of the Miss Teen Tinian and Miss Teen Rota would be joining the Saipan candidates during the April 17, 2004 coronation night.

According to Miss Teen CNMI president Noby Crisostomo, Tinian and Rota would have their own Ms. Teen contests—a first—and winners of these contests would be sent to Saipan for the Miss Teen CNMI tilt.

With this year's theme "Bonitas de Islas Marianas," Crisostomo hopes to highlight during the pageant the Spanish influence on the local culture.

"This year's theme is Spanish so we can highlight that part of our culture and tradition that was imparted by the Spaniards. We also hope to bring here what we learned from the Miss Antillas beauty contest," Crisostomo explained.

Miss Teen CNMI 2003 Remeylyn Julene Guerrero had competed in the Miss Antillas International Beauty Pageant in Venezuela, where she won second place.

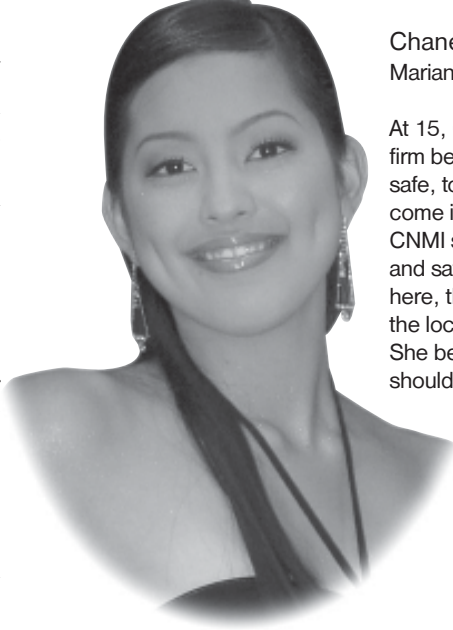
Also present during the media presentation Saturday was House Rep. Janet Maratita, who advised all contestants to face their fears and mistakes. Maratita also vowed to find ways on how to make Miss Teen CNMI candidates active in various community events.

Crisostomo said that after the coronation night on April 17, the 2004 Miss Teen-CNMI would fly to Venezuela the following month to compete in the 2004 Miss Antilles International.

He added that winners in the 2004 Miss Teen-CNMI should be physically and mentally prepared to represent the Northern Marianas in the international pageant.

Ms. Teen-CNMI—the local pageant search that capitalizes on the islands' attractive and spirited school-aged girls—was revived in 2002 after five years of dormancy.

Previous winners of the contest are Anita Jones Ayuyu, Cecilia Masga, Cecilia Taitano, Marian V. Pangelinan, and Gina Torres Duenas.



Chanel Cabrera, 15
Marianas High School

At 15, Chanel stands 5'9 and a firm believer that if the CNMI is safe, tourists would continue to come in. She believes that the CNMI should be kept beautiful and safe and once tourists are here, they can be introduced to the local culture and traditions. She believes that the CNMI should be exposed to the world.

⑤



Divana Dela Cruz, 16
Marianas High School

If she is crowned Miss Teen CNMI 2004, Divana hopes to organize a group that would help prevent suicide among the youth. Divana said flyers would be passed around to raise awareness in the community.

⑤



⑤ Jerbeth De Leon, 16
Marianas High School

Jerbeth is focusing on peer pressure as a problem she believes should be resolved to prevent teens from being involved in alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse. She said peer pressure comes in different forms and shapes and continues to haunt the younger generation.



Jocelyn Castro, 17
Kagman High School

Jocelyn joined the contest to build her self-esteem and self-confidence but if she wins, she hopes to work with students with disabilities and help families caring for people with disabilities. Jocelyn said it is hard for parents who have children with disabilities but with proper help, people with disabilities and their families would be more up to meeting these challenges head on.

②

Christal Leon Guerrero, 15
Kagman High School

Christal said that if she wins, she would do her best to join and establish organizations that would prevent domestic violence in the Commonwealth. Christal will also try her best to promote the local culture.

②



cars

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

The unmentioned AIDS policy

The international fight against AIDS, which was featured prominently in President Bush's State of the Union speech last year, went unmentioned Tuesday night. But the administration is nonetheless ramping up its effort in a serious way: The omnibus spending bill completing its passage through Congress has \$2.4 billion for AIDS in 2004, a fivefold increase since Bush took office. And the administration's budget request for 2005 is expected to be even bigger. Of the four criticisms often directed against the administration's efforts, two are misconceived, one is premature and only one is really telling.

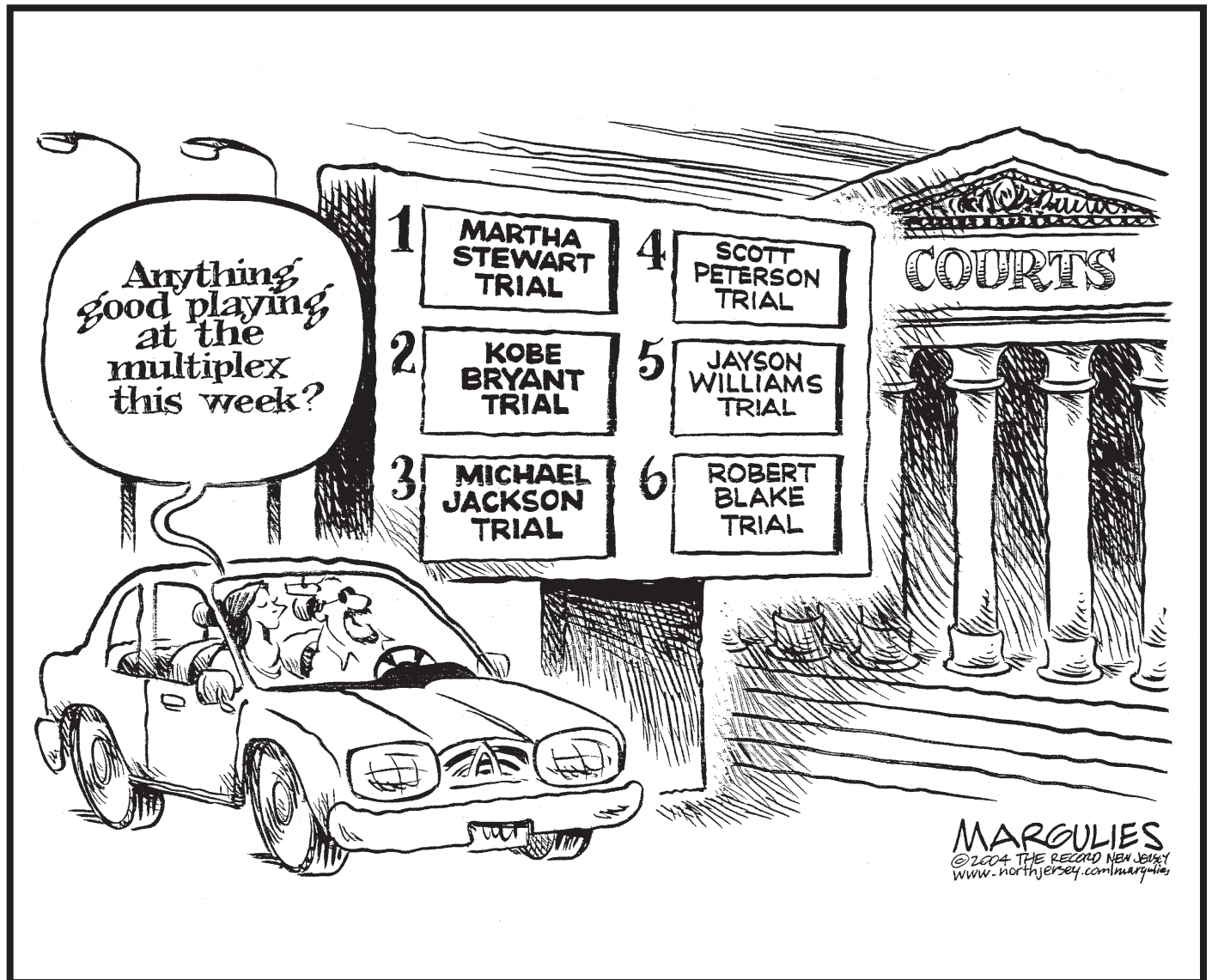
First, the misconceptions. The critics charge that it's bad to fight AIDS through faith-based groups. But a large proportion of medical and social services in poor countries is delivered by mission hospitals and the like; shunning them would be wrong. Likewise, the critics object to the administration's emphasis on programs to encourage sexual abstinence. But these account for a third of the proposed AIDS prevention drive (or 7 percent of the total U.S. effort against international AIDS), making the abstinence focus pronounced but not outrageous. Countries such as Uganda have succeeded in persuading teen-agers to delay their first sexual encounters by a year or more, significantly slowing the spread of the HIV virus.

The premature critique is that the administration is biased against cheap, non-patented "generic" medicines. This would be bad if true: Bush proposes to spend billions in taxpayer money on antiretroviral therapy, and he'd better shop wisely. Moreover, it may be true: Lobbyists for makers of patented drugs spend a lot of cash to influence the president's party, and his trade negotiators often insist that poor countries seeking free-trade deals with the United States accept restrictions on their use of generics. But for the moment officials insist that the push to get antiretroviral drugs to 2 million patients would involve procurement of generics, provided they prove safe. It will be interesting to see whether the safety argument is used as a cover for caving in to lobbyists, but so far that has not happened.

The telling complaint about Bush's AIDS plan is that it is unilateralist. The administration has decided to create its own new initiative, rather than work through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which the United States helped to create, and which is chaired by Tommy G. Thompson, Bush's secretary of health and human services. Perhaps this go-it-alone approach will pay off: The United States has a network of embassies and aid officials in poor countries that can oversee projects, something the Global Fund lacks. But as it augments its AIDS budget, the administration is likely to have difficulty increasing disbursements as quickly; in this transition phase, at least, it makes sense to give a large slice of the money to other agencies, including the Global Fund, that have a longer track record.

In the 2004 budget, the president initially requested that only \$200 million go to the Global Fund—less than a tenth of the total. Thankfully Congress, and particularly Rep. Jim Kolbe, R-Ariz., pushed that sum up to \$550 million. The 2005 budget request, which the president will submit soon, should avoid shortchanging the Global Fund again.

The Washington Post



Presidential vision isn't always a good thing

By ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER JR.
Special to the Los Angeles Times

The president of the United States, wrote Henry Adams, the most brilliant of American historians, "resembles the commander of a ship at sea. He must have a helm to grasp, a course to steer, a port to seek."

The Constitution awards presidents the helm, but creative presidents must possess and communicate the direction in which they propose to take the country. The port they seek is what the first President Bush dismissively called "the vision thing."

Let us interview another president on this point. Franklin D. Roosevelt was by common consent one of the great presidents of the United States. The presidency, FDR said, "is not merely an administrative office. That's the least of it. It is more than an engineering job, efficient or inefficient. It is predominantly a place of moral leadership. All our great presidents were leaders of thought at times when certain historic ideas in the life of the nation had to be clarified." In other words, they were possessed by their visions.

So, FDR continued, Washington personified the idea of federal union. Jefferson typified the theory of democracy, which Jackson reaffirmed. Lincoln, by condemning slavery and secession, put two great principles of government forever beyond question. Cleveland embodied rugged honesty in a corrupt age. Theodore Roosevelt and Wilson were both moral leaders using the presidency as a pulpit. "Without leadership alert and sensitive to change," FDR wrote, "we are bogged up or lose our way."

But a vision per se is not necessarily a good thing. Adolf Hitler had a vision. Josef Stalin had a vision. Especially when visions harden into dogmatic ideologies, they become inhuman, cruel and dangerous. Bush the elder was generally held to have a vision deficit, but that's not the same as having a defective vision. Bush the elder was a moderate as president, and he did not harm the republic.

Bush the younger is another matter. In his State of the Union address, he presented a medley of visions. Is it reasonable to suppose that the son feels that his father committed two fatal errors, which he is determined not to repeat? One might be the folly of alienating the ideological right. The other—the absence of a vision.

Born again, Bush the younger has a messianic tinge about him. He thinks big and wants to make his mark on history. Four hours of interviews left Bob Woodward with the impression, as he wrote in "Bush at War," that "the president was casting his mission and that of the country in the grand vision of God's master plan."

His grand vision told Bush that American troops invading Iraq would be hailed as liberators, not hated as occupiers, and that the

transformation of Iraq under American sponsorship into a Jeffersonian democracy would have a domino effect in democratizing the entire Islamic world.

That dream has waned, and so has the vision that lies behind it. It turns out that the president's vision-free father had a much more accurate forecast of what an American war against Iraq would bring. Bush the elder wrote, defending (with Gen. Brent Scowcroft) his decision not to advance to Baghdad during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, "Trying to eliminate Saddam would have incurred incalculable human and political costs. ... Had we gone the invasion route, the United States could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land."

The United States is today an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land. In a couple of years, Bush the younger has succeeded in turning the international wave of sympathy that engulfed the United States after 9/11 into worldwide dislike, distrust and even hatred. With his Iraq vision collapsing around him, Bush is trying to dump his self-created mess on the United Nations, heretofore an object of contempt in his administration. And he is trying out a new vision—the moon and Mars.

In this respect he is following the example of President Kennedy, who sought to repair American self-confidence after the Bay of Pigs by proposing to send men to the moon and return them safely to Earth "before this decade is out." A difference is that the preventive war against Iraq was an essential part of the Bush vision, but the Bay of Pigs was not part of the JFK vision. It was a CIA vision inherited from the Eisenhower administration.

I was appalled by Bush's preventive war against Iraq, as I was appalled in the Kennedy White House by the Bay of Pigs. And as I applauded JFK's vision of landing men on the moon, so I applaud Bush's vision of landing men on Mars.

It has been almost a third of a century since human beings took a step on the moon—rather as if no intrepid mariner had bothered after 1492 to follow up on Christopher Columbus. Yet 500 years from now (if humans have not blown up the planet), the 20th century will be remembered, if at all, as the century in which man began the exploration of space.

Some visions are intelligent and benign. Other visions are stupid and malevolent. "Where there is no vision ... the people perish," the Good Book says. Where there is a defective vision, people perish too. In a democracy, it is up to the people themselves to make the fateful choice.

Schlesinger Jr., a special assistant to President Kennedy, has twice won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award.

Letter to the Editor

Saipan Tribune welcomes contributions. All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name, address and, if possible, fax or telephone number. Letters are edited for space, clarity and fairness.

An alternative to the Teacher Rep election

Congratulations to Mr. Ambrose A. Bennett for winning twice in the recent teacher's rep election. He declared himself a winner before the election for having been influential in getting the election to come about and rightly so. Then he won by sixteen votes from less than one third of all the eligible voters. Let us wish him the best.

However, as Mr. J. Vallejera pointed out in his Tribune column of Jan. 23, the election itself was an embarrassment for our Commonwealth teachers. This low turnout certainly does not give Mr. Bennett any clear mandate to speak for our Commonwealth teachers. He needs none anyway. His letter writing on many topics is regularly printed in both local papers. These letters, though, are often filled with paragraphs loaded with many more I's than collective pronouns such as "we" and "our". Let us hope that as a teacher rep he clearly delineates when he's speaking on behalf of teachers and when he is speaking on his own behalf. This was one of the problems during Franklin Keiper's "lame duck" tenure as BOE rep.

As a fellow teaching colleague who knows Mr. Bennett to be a fair-minded person who truly wants teacher representation, let us consider the following recommendation. Let Mr. Bennett request the governor and the BOE another election at the end of this school year. The election would be held on a Saturday and in at least four different locations in the north, south, east and west quadrants of the island. Tinian and Rota would choose their own similar convenient location, time and date. The Kagman Multipurpose Center, for example, might be a practical polling place for teachers from the three new schools over there. A clear majority of at least 51 percent of all eligible teacher voters would be the necessary quorum for the election to be considered valid.

One has to wonder if the whole process of putting a teacher on the BOE couldn't be solved by the following alternative process. The CNMI teacher of the year (TOY) from one school year becomes the BOE rep the next year by default. This person is then given morning classes to continue their excellent teaching careers and afternoons off or one day off a week to visit other schools and attend BOE luncheons and meetings, which are scheduled to allow the rep to attend. Respective teachers of the year from other schools, including of course Tinian and Rota, would also be given one day or afternoon a month to meet together with the BOE rep. Wouldn't this save time and money for all involved? Wouldn't all schools get equitable representation on the board this way? Guess what? This will never happen—though I'd be glad to be proven wrong. Ego, internal power struggles, nepotism, favoritism, bias, ignorance of unions and collective bargaining and genuine fear of job loss for speaking out will stop these ideas dead in their tracks.

It should also be pointed out that embarrassment about this past election be shared by those in governmental charge and some members of the BOE that let years pass by without seeing to it that at least there was a temporary teacher rep at each and every BOE meeting. There's no easy answer to this teacher rep issue but what seems to be crystal clear is that winning an election participated in by less than 30 percent of those eligible and by less than twenty votes is by no means a clear mandate for leadership. Many teachers, many directions, more elections.

Joe Connolly
Koblerville, Saipan

Facilitating consensus

"I do not agree" are four simple words that usually come in a bellowed cadence of sounds to trip a group discourse into a cycle of endless discussion. Whether it is a committee meeting, a community forum, a formal legislative deliberation, or even just a friendly chat, nothing derails clarity and understanding more than those words.

In classical learning, students are discouraged by practice to ask questions because that would be casting doubt on the veracity of a teacher's pronouncements. In the political arena, to question the voice of authority is to chisel on the foundations of legitimate power. Power seats do not take to questions easily.

In today's democratic space, the right to disagree on a legislative proposal is enshrined in the parliamentary procedure. For every "pro", a "con" is required to ventilate a proposal's merit, presumably, to allow for informed choice. "I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend forever your right to say it," is an oft-quoted statement.

However, "I do not agree," is seldom a statement to designate a different perspective. Often, it is a wrench thrown into the pathway of an oncoming proposal, the throwing of which is full of emotions that clouds rational clarity.

Comes the role of the consensus facilitator. In a group discourse where creating a common mind and a single direction are avowed goals, the art of facilitating consensus is a valued leadership skill.

When presiding over a meeting where the "I do not agree" statement is made, it is helpful to respond by saying: "So-and-so offered us a perspective, and you see it differently. Let's hear how you see it differently." If the speaker persists on addressing him/herself to what another person said, the presider may point out that the rest of the group may have other perspectives as well.

Speakers are encouraged to focus on what they think rather than on their version of what other people have said.

A chalkboard, newsprint (butcher paper) and markers, or any form of writing media always comes handy to capture what is being said. Objectifying the actual words used by speakers makes sense. A chair trying to restate someone's statement by saying something like, "I hear you saying that" does not clarify. It only prolongs unnecessary, if not heated discussion.

Good facilitators never go to a meeting without writing implements. In addition to the chalkboard, or an easel with newsprint, markers, 8x5 cards or plain paper, and masking tape do wonders on a vertical flat surface in objectifying units of data and managing pieces of information.

Now, before one gets the impression that this piece is about discouraging disagreements, it is not. Disagreements abound in real life and it must be recognized as such. This is about arriving at a

By **JAIME R. VERGARA**

Vergara is a Social Studies 6th grade teacher at San Vicente Elementary School and occasionally writes as a guest columnist for the Saipan Tribune.



consensus, and how that might be facilitated.

So, how does one facilitate a consensus? We might revisit the old story of the "truth" likened to an elephant being groped at by blind persons, and each one convinced that their experience constitutes the truth. All we really have are different perspectives. Substitute search for "reality" or "experienced authenticity" for the pursuit of "truth" in arriving at a consensus, and we might have a good grasp of what is required.

Good meetings begin with a clear context. "This meeting is about CATS, not dogs, and we do not have the whole night to discuss it. We have an hour . . ." Parameters are clearly defined.

The value of any group enterprise, be it a corporation, cooperative or ad hoc committee, is in the human resource. Maximizing the potential of the "wily human factor" around a table is the challenge in today's democratized ethos.

Brainstorming has become a handy tool, more so if it addresses a focused question. Either by speaking, or writing, or both, everyone's perspective has to be gleaned. In so doing, we have the prospect of everyone actually learning to listen to one another.

Brainstorming can be short-circuited by those who will demand that concerns or issues be prematurely "prioritized". Arriving at a comprehensive plate of perspectives must be encouraged. Then, ask participants to gestalt (a German term to mean "see the whole/total picture") what they heard. The body might split into smaller groups and write-up or talk-up a group's gestalt, clarify its constituent parts, then report it to the larger body. At this point, proposals would be encouraged, and a possible consensus arrived at. A good consensus never really requires "voting." If a vote needs to be taken, it usually just widens an existing division, and the disagreement continues.

Context. Brainstorm. Gestalt. Proposal. Consensus. A simple five part process that leaders who facilitate consensus have been known to follow.

Of course, there are leaders who are more concerned about their place in the annals of human history than facilitating a consensus. But that's grist for another column.

Why Mars? Because it's there

By **CARL M. CANNON**

Special to the Los Angeles Times

When George W. Bush announced his intention to re-establish a human presence on the moon and send explorers to Mars, the usual criticisms followed like vapors in a jet stream.

The Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, claimed the mission couldn't succeed unless the National Aeronautics and Space Administration was privatized. Rep. John M. Spratt Jr. of South Carolina, the ranking Democrat on the House Budget Committee, said Bush's vision "has an element of escapism about it." Sen. Joe Lieberman, a Democratic presidential contender, expressed support for future space travel, but not until we've balanced the budget, eliminated our dependence on foreign oil—and conquered disease.

This is not new thinking. Before Thomas Jefferson dispatched Lewis and Clark to explore the vast lands obtained in the Louisiana Purchase, critics protested the rationale of the expedition. "A great waste, a wilderness," complained a Boston newspaper. "We are to give money of which we have too little, for land of which we already have too much." Federalist politician Joshua Green added that the endeavor was "a shameful gross speculation, pretending to bring we knew not what, situated we knew not where, and (with) no more right to it than ... to land in the moon."

Exploration of the moon and Mars will be more expensive than Bush predicts, will probably take longer to accomplish and may provide less in technological gains than he envisions. Likewise, the earthly problems described by critics are real enough. Yet it is Bush and a pantheon of previous presidents—and not the naysayers—who are on solid historical ground.

From the beginning, American presidents and the American people have consistently sought to go beyond the frontiers of nature and knowledge. This impulse is part of America's national makeup, and key to our success as a people.

"I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the

past," said Jefferson, who in writing to John Adams once applied the word "Argonauts"—the great voyagers of Greek mythology—to describe the men of 1776. This is an apt reminder that the Wright brothers' flight and the lunar landing were not historical accidents; they were imperatives of the American mind and the American identity.

"The hallmark of the American adventure has been a willingness—even an eagerness—to reach for the unknown," Gerald Ford observed in a 1976 bicentennial speech. "In the early 17th century, a few fragile vessels—like the Discovery in 1607 and the Mayflower in 1620—sailed across 3,000 miles of unfriendly sea. Their passengers and crew knew far less about their destination than the American astronauts knew at liftoff about the lunar landscape, a quarter-million miles away."

If the resources required of such ventures are great, the courage is greater. Gus Grissom, one of the original seven Mercury astronauts, warned that his profession was dangerous. "If we die, we want people to accept it," he said. "And we hope that if anything happens to us, it will not delay the program. The conquest of space is worth the risk."

Brave words did not cushion the impact on Lyndon Johnson when Grissom and two other Apollo astronauts were killed in a launch-pad fire. "The shock," LBJ said later, "hit me like a physical blow." American space travel continued, however, pushed by Johnson and future presidents despite the losses of the space shuttle crews.

John Kennedy had invoked a challenge to the Soviet Union in 1961 when announcing his goal of putting a man on the moon within a decade. But by the next year, he was appealing to loftier national instincts. Kennedy invoked the words of British explorer George Mallory, who, when asked why he wanted to climb Mount Everest, replied, "because it is there." "Well, space is there, and we're going to climb it," Kennedy said. "And the moon and the planets are there, and new hopes for knowledge and peace are there."

Cannon covers the White House for National Journal.

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Hawaii's Lingle to push for more Compact impact aid

HONOLULU, Hawaii (AP)—While Hawaii didn't get as much money as it wanted from the federal government to provide services for Micronesian and Marshallese immigrants, that won't deter the state from continuing to push for more aid, Gov. Linda Lingle says.

"In politics, we deal with it all the time—you don't get everything you want all the time," Lingle said. "But you need to be going in the right direction, and the agreement certainly was going in the right direction from my point of view."

Lingle was speaking of the federal government's allocation of \$30 million to be divided among Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands to provide social services for Micronesian and Marshallese immigrants who arrive on their shores under the Compacts of Free Association.

The compacts—which allow Micronesians and Marshallese to freely

come to the United States and its territories—were first negotiated in 1986 and renewed last month by the Bush administration. They recognize the island nations' independence and set forth a financial and tactical relationship between their governments and the U.S. government.

Upon renewal, the compacts were amended to include \$30 million for Hawaii and the other territories, which have long lobbied the U.S. government to help foot the bill for providing education, health and other services for immigrants.

Guam received the highest share of the funds, \$14.2 million, based on the number of immigrants who live there. Hawaii received \$10.5 million.

The distribution formula caused a rift between the U.S. Department of the Interior, which oversees Insular Affairs, and Hawaii's congressional delegation, which led to the cancellation of a planned ceremony last week in

Honolulu to announce the grants.

Lingle agreed that \$10.5 million won't cover the costs of providing for immigrants, but it still is more than Hawaii has received in the past.

"I don't think anybody felt they got enough," Lingle said at a news conference last week, flanked by Northern Marianas Gov. Juan Babauta and American Samoa Gov. Togiola Tulafono.

"As the congressional delegation stated, they will be working hard to get additional funding in the future," she said. "But it was more than we were getting previously by a substantial amount, so it's progress in the right direction."

In Hawaii, officials say the state spent about \$32 million in 2002 providing services for a population of about 7,000 Marshallese, and a slightly smaller number of Micronesians.

The state received about \$3 million for fiscal year 2003 in so-called compact-impact aid.

LAND

From Page 1

evaluate the viability of Palau Micronesia Air.

The Palau-based airline has obtained an investment commitment of \$500,000 from the CNMI government.

To prevent any future delays in the release of funds, the board passed a resolution Saturday authorizing other CDA officials to sign off MPLA requests.

Meantime, MPLA commissioner Henry S. Hofschneider said Friday that the CDA's signature had authorized BoG to place the requested amount on MPLA's special account for land compensation.

He said that, of 62 land claimants who received MPLA compensation offers, 43 have accepted the offers, while nine have rejected them.

Those who have accepted the offers will begin to receive their payments this week.

Hofschneider said those who will get their claims need to present their Social Security number or a taxpayer's identification card. Concerned individuals can claim their compensation at the MPLA office, located at the ground floor of Sablan Building in Chalan Kanoa.

"They have to present SSS or Tax ID's when they come," said Hofschneider.

The Attorney General's Office earlier advised land claimants to report their total compensation to the government for tax purposes.

The AGO said recipients need to seek assistance from a tax professional to determine their estimated tax payment.

"It's very important that they

know about it now. So we're reminding them to seek the advice of a tax professional before they start spending their money...to avoid getting into financial trouble later," said Attorney General Pam Brown.

The AGO said that under the U.S. and CNMI laws, recipients are required to report such payments on their income tax returns or gross revenue tax return.

Tax payment differs depending whether the compensation is for land or for accumulated interest on the payments for the land or whether the recipient is a business or an individual.

The MPLA board earlier approved 75 folders for immediate land compensation after the signing and release of the \$40-million bond.

Of the total amount, only about \$27 million will be used for land compensation since \$11 million has been allotted for a pending prison project. The bond underwriter also deducted \$1.5 million for cost of the bond issuance.

The government is given 30 years to pay off the loan at an annual interest of 6.75 percent.

The first batch of claimants are landowners whose lands were acquired by the CNMI government for rights-of-way. The Land Compensation Act mandates the government to prioritize the payment for lands used for rights-of-way.

The next would be those whose lands were acquired for ponding basins. Lastly, the government will settle with landowners of wetlands and other claims. The MPLA has listed some 120 eligible land claimants in the CNMI.

The payments to landowners are based on the value of the properties at the time of taking by the Commonwealth.

CDA

From Page 1

In a meeting Saturday, the CDA board instructed CDA executive director Mary Lou Ada to contact NMC on the issue.

Going into an interim financing for NMC, according to Igisomar, is not easy as it put assets at risk.

"The question there is, 'Whose assets are going to be in the hook? Is it the CNMI's or CDA's?' If it's CNMI, that needs legislative approval. And that takes time. If it's CDA, that would mean freezing up assets and that involves great risks. It's definitely no simple matter," he said.

He said it would help if NMC could decide early on as to its funding prospects with MPLT and NMIRF.

The involvement of MPLT and NMIRF in the financing equation may, however, be put in question. "There's a question of 'Can they actually assist?' Hopefully, they can make a quick decision whether they could do it. They

[MPLT, NMIRF, NMC] need to agree where they stand," said Igisomar.

On a personal level, he said he finds the Pacific Gateway "a good project," but he indicated that much more needs to be done for the project to take off. "It's a good project. Beautiful. The idea is good but as to the numbers...that's the question."

Igisomar said CDA will write to Gov. Juan N. Babauta informing him about the CDA's intent to work with NMC on the issue.

Babauta earlier asked the CDA board to help NMC secure interim financing to ensure that the Pacific Gateway gets started.

"CDA may be able to play a role by providing a guarantee of interim financing, while the Board of Regents negotiates with NMIRF and MPLT and while the board waits for a response to the [loan] application with USDA," said the governor in a Jan. 20, letter.

He said the interim financing would ensure that the project's opening—January 2005—would no longer be delayed.

The NMC, which entered into \$7.5 million purchase of La Fiesta Shopping Mall in San Roque last August, had originally planned to begin the Pacific Gateway by fall 2004. It has been moved to January 2005 due to lack of funding.

"The sooner the college is operating out of the La Fiesta site, the sooner our economy will begin to realize the benefits of this new [economic] activity," Babauta had said.

In his letter, Babauta noted that his office has invested \$3.75 million of federal funds for the project.

NMC would need an additional \$10 million to renovate the mall and acquire necessary equipment.

The NMC is set to submit an \$8-million direct loan with USDA-RD within the month.

The Gateway projects aims to attract international students from China, Korea, and Japan to enroll with NMC. The college hopes to recruit some 500 additional students on the project's first year.

DEAD

From Page 1

The Department of Lands and Natural Resources disclosed this finding, based on an article by Michael Trianni, a research scientist and senior marine biologist at the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The DLNR said the article was published in the scientific journal *Micronesica*.

"The article tells of the autopsy on a dead dolphin with several injuries and the discovery that dolphins eat seagrass when injured and unable to catch fish," the DLNR said.

"The article also explains that a scientific literature search produced no

other publications reporting dolphins feeding on seagrass. Trianni concludes that the dolphin was starving, could not pursue fish and thus chose to feed on seagrass," it added.

Co-authored by Kurt Kessler, Trianni's article also told of the frequent stranding of spinner dolphins in the Saipan lagoon during low tide, the DLNR said. The article reportedly explained three recent stranding of dolphins, which could have died had DFW staff not been able to herd the creatures to open sea.

The DLNR commended Trianni for his research work for the DFW, disclosing that the marine biologist has authored five articles published in

scientific journals in the past 18 months.

The agency disclosed that Trianni authored an article on reef fish abundance in CNMI's marine protected areas, which was published in Australia as part of the proceedings of the World Congress on Aquatic Protected Areas.

The DLNR explained that the article dealt with methods used to determine the increase in reef fish population, including that on the Managaha Marine Conservation Area.

"The article acknowledges the important contributions to the aquatic protected area reef fish surveys made by the DFW reef fish survey team composed of Jacinto Taman, Tony Flores, Rudy Pangelinan, Chris

Alepuyo, Michael Tenorio, Gus Aguon and Dr. Kate Moots," the DLNR added.

Trianni said the emphasis of his work on fishery protection and development at the DFW is geared toward sustainable uses of fish resources. He noted the ban on gill nets and fishing with scuba gear, which the DLNR currently implements.

"The ban on the use of gill nets has resulted in many more fishermen being able to catch seasonal fish such as the scad mackerel and juvenile jacks for prolonged periods of time. The marine protected areas, which are no-take zones, enable fish stocks to grow to maturity, reproduce and over time migrate and seed depleted areas of

the lagoon," Trianni said.

In commending Trianni, the DLNR also disclosed the marine biologist's work on the sea cucumber fishery in Rota, which was published by the South Pacific Commission *Beche-de-Mer Bulletin*. The department also mentioned Trianni's article evaluating the sea cucumber resource on Saipan, which was published in the proceedings of the 9th International Coral Reef Symposium.

The DLNR said Trianni has also authored an article that focused on collected data in connection with the trochus season on Saipan, which was published in the South Pacific Commission's *Trochus Bulletin*.

Saipan Tribune Make it your *DAILY* habit.

February is Parent Leadership Month

Parents and parent groups are set to gather today, Feb. 2, to observe the proclamation of February 2004 as National Parent Leadership Month. Parents Anonymous of the Northern Mariana Islands will be recognizing, honoring and celebrating parents for leadership roles in their homes and the community. Gov. Juan N. Babauta will make the proclamation at 11am at the Office of the Governor.

National Parent Leadership Month was created to educate the public about this vital family strengthening and community building strategy, and to encourage professional, policymakers and other community members to partner with parents in addressing issues that affect children and families.

Parent Leadership occurs when parents gain the knowledge and skills to function in meaningful leadership roles and represent a “parent voice” to help shape the lives of families and the community, as well as shape the direction of programs and policies that impact them.

Parents, grandparents, kinship care providers, foster parents, and anyone in a parenting role who has personal experience in using resources or services to strengthen their families have the potential to

become Parent Leaders. “Parent Leadership is an essential component in all effective family strengthening and child abuse prevention programs,” said Division of Youth Services director Victor Mesta. “Better outcomes for families are achieved when parents have the opportunity to

use their knowledge and expertise through meaningful and active roles in the planning, implementation, oversight and evaluation of programs that affect families and children. Parents find themselves accomplishing things that may have seemed impossible before.” As part of the month’s

activities, parent organizations will be invited to submit the names of outstanding Parent Leaders for public recognition. Parents and professionals in the Northern Marianas and the United States are working together in new ways, participating in local, regional and national planning processes,

collaborating as grant reviewers and program evaluators, and serving together on advisory boards and coalitions. When parents are speaking and acting from the parent’s perspective rather than as staff from an organization or institution, they are Parent Leaders.

Founded in 1999, Parents Anonymous of the Northern Mariana Islands is joining with Parents Anonymous Inc., the nation’s oldest family strengthening

and child abuse prevention organization and founder of National Parent Leadership Month, to honor anyone in a parenting role who has taken steps to provide leadership in their home or community or at the state or national level. For more information about activities related to National Parent Leadership Month, contact the Division of Youth Services’ Parent Education Program at 670-664-2585 or parented@saipan.com.

Fiji reappoints top military commander

SUVA, Fiji (FijiSUN/PIR)—Fiji Army Commander Voreqe Bainimarama will remain at his post following a decision yesterday by President Ratu Josefa Iloilo to extend his term. Accepting the appointment, Bainimarama thanked the President and pledged his personal as well as the RFMF’s loyalty and support to his office and to the Government.

Ratu Josefa said this was a time of nation building for all, demanding that Fiji move forward as one people to achieve prosperity and security. Last night, the commander would not say how long his term is but an official with the Home Affairs Ministry said his term would be for five years.

His reappointment follows months of speculation and pressure on the Government to extend the commander’s term. Home Affairs Minister Joketani Cokanasiga declined to comment on the reappointment yesterday.

Commodore Bainimarama and Mr. Cokanasiga were summoned by President Ratu Josefa Iloilo to Government House yesterday morning. After consultations between Mr. Cokanasiga and the National Security Council, of which the Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, is chairman, it was resolved that Commodore Bainimarama’s term be extended.

microl
oh yeah
+red

Continental: New NMI flights likely

GUAM—If all goes according to Continental Micronesia's plans, people who want to fly to Saipan or Rota won't need to catch early morning flights but will be able to travel at several different times in the day.

Wally Dias, staff vice president of sales and promotions at Continental Micronesia, said the airline has partnered with Cape Air, a Massachusetts-based commuter airline, to provide flights to and from the Commonwealth of the

Northern Mariana Islands several times a day.

Though a schedule hasn't been worked out yet, the airline hopes to debut the service July 1. Tinian also is being considered as a possible destination, Dias said.

"It's something that really had its genesis in the CNMI because our schedule there is relatively limited," Dias said. "We have three flights a day that go back and forth between Guam and Saipan. And because of the way the schedule works, the first flight

out of Saipan can leave as early as 4:30 in the morning so it's very inconvenient for customers (who) just want to come over to Guam for business."

Continental had been looking for a way to improve its service for the interisland flights, but couldn't add more jet service because the anticipated passenger load would not be enough to support frequent flights by its large jets.

Dias said the company then turned to looking at a partnership

with a company that could fly and maintain smaller commuter planes, but was unable to work anything out with local commuter companies.

Officials from local commuter companies Freedom Air and Pacific Island Aviation could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Continental then contacted its commuter airline partners in the U.S. mainland. Cape Air took Continental up on the offer.

The Cape Cod company is

going to lease, renovate, fly and maintain three of Continental's old ATR-42 planes that Continental Express—Continental's commuter service—no longer operates because it is a jet-only service. Dias noted that Continental's morning jet service from Guam to the CNMI will continue along with the commuter service.

Dias said the passenger cost has yet to be worked out, but noted the fares will be similar to what is being offered in commuter markets. With a three-

day advance booking, round trips can be purchased for about \$150, Dias said.

"We're very excited about it because, not only is it an opportunity to better serve our customers, ... but also for us to re-enter a market in which we haven't been in a long time, which is Rota," he said. "It also allows us to do something we haven't done in seven or eight years, which is to start marketing with our Japanese wholesalers in Guam and the CNMI to offer day trips." (PDN/PIR)

Agriculture experts from Philippines help PNG

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea (PNG Post-Courier/PIR)—A group of Filipino agriculture experts have arrived in Papua New Guinea to help increase food production.

The 10-member team, led by Lauro Hernandez, work with The Philippine Agriculture Department and are being seconded to the Food Agriculture Organisation food security program in Morobe Province.

The project is also administered under the agreement, South-South Cooperation Tripartite Agreement and is aimed at strengthening co-operation among developing countries.

The team will implement the second phase of the program that was started in 1996 in Kaiapit and Huon districts to help Papua New Guineans produce enough excess food for consumption as well as for sale for cash.

Department of Agriculture and Livestock's chief scientific officer Dr Chris Dekuku was the former co-ordinator of the program.

In briefing the team of what to expect from the people while living in the area, he said: "You look after them and they will look after you. I lived there for several years and had no problems with them." He is originally from Africa, but is now working with DAL in Port Moresby.

He said the program included a rice project, African yams, rabbits, ducks, aquaculture (land-based fisheries), vegetables and small irrigation development.

Various groups in Lae collaborated with DAL and farmers in the two districts on the projects. The Taiwanese team based in Bubia also provided their expertise on the rice project. The first phase ended in 2000.

Dr. Dekuku said many people saw the value of the program and had started their own small-scale projects on their farms, adding his team had expertise in water use and management, field crop production, horticulture cropping, soil fertility management and laboratory analysis.

Yarobwemals are 2004 World Marriage Day coordinators

Tony and Linda Yarobwemal have been chosen as the coordinator-couple for this year's World Marriage Day celebration, according to Contact Couple for the CNMI Marriage Encounter Franklin and Celina Babauta and Marriage Encounter executive priest Fr. Ike Ayuyu.

The leadership expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the Yarobwemals and their Love Circle group for their voluntary service to the marriage encounter community.

According to Tony and Linda, World Marriage Day, although sponsored by Worldwide Marriage Encounter, is not just for encountered couples only.

Tony STRESSED: "World Marriage Day celebration is for all married couples, those who were encountered as well as those who were not. What we are celebrating here is the sacred union of man and woman as husband and wife."

World Marriage Day is sponsored by the Worldwide Marriage Encounter movement, the largest pro-marriage organization in the world today. The event is observed annually worldwide on the second Sunday of February. This year the second Sunday falls on Feb. 8.

The couple-coordinator says that locally the observance of World Marriage Day has always been preceded by two public proclamations that focuses on the institution, the beauty, and the permanency of marriage. One proclamation comes from governor's office and the other, on a diocesan-wide level, from the office of the bishop. These proclamations had already been signed last Wednesday, Jan. 28 at 10:30am and 3:00pm respectively.

The Yarobwemals said the culmination of World Marriage Day is the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday, Feb. 8, at San Jose Church in Oleai at 9am.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Tony and Linda Yarobwemal pose with their eight-year-old daughter, Lee Anne.

"We encourage all married couples, encountered or not, to join us on this day. This will be the best time for all married couples to renew their marriage vows," said the couple in a statement.

Tony and Linda Yarobwemal were married on May 21, 1994 by the late Fr. Gary Bradley. They made their Marriage Encounter Weekend on Nov. 30-December 2, 2001 at Stanford Resort Hotel in San Vicente.

The couple is very active in the movement. They have joined "Steps Along Our Journey" sessions. This is a 12-step post-weekend reinforcement program aimed at understanding and living out the concepts presented on the weekend.

After the "Steps" sessions

came to an end, the Yarobwemals shared that their group "still hunger for more and we did not want to sever the couple-bonding we have created with each other" so the same group formed their own "Love Circle." Feeding from each other's high spirits, it was their Love Circle group that answered the challenge this year to coordinate the World Marriage Day and the upcoming Sweethearts' Ball the week after.

Tony and Linda thanked the M.E. community for giving them their "blessing" to coordinate this year's World Marriage Day.

The Yarobwemals have an 8 year old daughter, Lee Anne. (Jess R. A. Sonoda)



Aussie contractor in Solomons cuts wages

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (RNZI/PIR)—An Australian contractor with the Regional Assistance Mission, Patrick Defense Logistics, has defended cuts to the wages of its Solomon Islands workers in Honiara.

The company has a contract with the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to provide accommodation, meals, maintenance, transport and other support activities for the two bases set up at Honiara's Henderson Field Airport.

It has been employing Solomon Islanders in a range of roles since it arrived, but this week, wages and allowances were cut.

A spokesperson for Patrick, Felicity Moffat, says while the pay has been cut, it is still at least 30 percent more than the going rate in Honiara.

John Roughan of the Solomon Island Development Trust says the nature of the work has not changed and the slashed wages shows the arrogance of Patrick Logistics, which is exploiting unorganized workers who are desperate for employment.

Fiji villagers lack road, grow marijuana

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (RNZI/PIR)—Seven villages in the interior highlands of Fiji's main island of Viti Levu have promised the government that their people will stop growing marijuana for sale.

Ten government ministers traveled last week to the remote area of Navatusila to speak with the 800 residents there, assessing what services they need and persuading them to stop growing the illicit drug.

An officer with the Information ministry, Viliame Tikotami, travelled with the ministers.

He says the villagers told the MPs, because there is no road linking them with the outside world, it takes days to get traditional crops of taro, cassava and kumara to the closest market.

"They have been planting marijuana because it's easy to take to the market. On horseback they would be taking any crops on a long way, which means three days."

38 Papuans die after eating tainted pork

MELBOURNE, Australia (Radio Australia/PIR)—In Indonesia's Papua province, 38 people have died after eating contaminated pork.

Officials say some 1,857 Papuans suffered diarrhea after eating the leftover pork.

An official says residents in Pegunungan Bintang district in the Central Highlands had eaten roast pork left over from a traditional Christmas feast.

A coordinator at the Health Crisis Center in the provincial capital, Jayapura, says the food was apparently not preserved and was contaminated with bacteria.

Major Honiara fire under investigation

MELBOURNE, Australia (Radio Australia/PIR)—Investigators are probing the cause of a major overnight fire in the Solomon Islands capital, Honiara.

The blaze, which is thought to have started in a Chinese restaurant, destroyed two blocks in the centre of the city.

Hampered by a lack of proper equipment, firefighters took almost six hours to bring the blaze under control.

At one stage it threatened to spread to a nearby Shell oil depot.

The firefighting effort was assisted by the deployment of a helicopter of the regional assistance force, which dropped water on the blaze, as well as the Shell company's own firefighting resources.

Tuvalu without power for a week

MELBOURNE, Australia (Radio Australia/PIR)—Technicians in Tuvalu have been working to restore power to the capital, Funafuti, and surrounding areas, for almost a week.

Officials say replacement high voltage cable has been flown in from New Zealand, together with a specialist installer.

The power blackout is said to have affected government operations as well as business.

It was hoped power would be restored today.

Business

Consumer confidence is highest since 2000

NEW YORK (AP)—Consumer confidence rose in January to its best level since November of 2000, amid an improving view of both current and future circumstances, according to a report released Friday.

The University of Michigan’s consumer sentiment index moved to 103.8 at the end of January, compared with December’s reading of 92.6, according to those who had seen the subscriber-only report. The final January level also compares favorably with the preliminary 103.2 reading that was reported at mid-month.

Economists surveyed by Dow Jones Newswires and CNBC had expected the final January data would maintain most of the strength of the preliminary report. The median estimate of 16 forecasters was for a reading of 102.9.

The research group said its index of current conditions rose to 109.5 at the end of January, versus 97 in December. The preliminary January reading was 108.9. Meanwhile, the Michigan index on expectations, which covers consumers’ longer-term views, stood at 100.1 in January, compared to 89.8 in December, and 99.5 in the preliminary January data.

Consumer confidence gauges have improved over recent months, amid a surprising amount of volatility, particularly in the Michigan data. Their gains have followed the broader improvement in the U.S. economy over recent months, a recovery that economists and policy makers broadly expect will define the current year as well.

Earlier Friday, the government reported that the economy expanded at a 4 percent annualized pace in the fourth quarter, in its first estimate of growth for that period.

The January Michigan data is “constructive” for the economy, said Carey Leahy, economist with Deutsche Bank in New York. “Anything above 90 is good, anything above 100 is great,” Leahy said, adding he sees the data imparting some lift to consumer spending at the beginning of the year.



AP
Annie Leith holds a bottle of Pepsi-Cola in this undated frame from video of a commercial that will air during Super Bowl Sunday, Feb. 1, 2004.

Illegal music downloader in Super Bowl ad

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Down-loading music online from rogue file-sharing networks got 14-year-old Annie Leith sued for thousands of dollars. Now it has landed her a leading spot on a national ad that will debut during the Super Bowl.

Leith and her 17-year-old sister downloaded 960 songs over a three-year period using the popular Kazaa program. But the free music binge got Leith ensnared in the legal dragnet cast by the Recording Industry Association of America in September.

“We didn’t know it was illegal,” the New York City high school freshman said Friday.

The lawsuit was ultimately settled for \$3,000. But Leith couldn’t pass up a chance to appear in a nationally televised commercial that put a twist on her costly experience.

The ad promotes a digital music giveaway offer from Pepsi-Cola and Apple Computer Co.’s iTunes Music Store. Beginning Feb. 1, 100 million bottle caps on a variety of Pepsi soft drinks will include a code for a free song download on iTunes.

In the ad, Leith proudly says she was among hundreds of music fans sued for downloading songs without paying for them, then vows to continue doing so—on iTunes.

In the background, Green Day’s version of “I Fought The Law (And The Law Won),” can be heard. Her sister and 14 other teens whom Pepsi identifies as recipients of copyright lawsuits for illegally downloading songs appear in the ad with Leith.

The RIAA applauded the ad, even though it may serve to remind some of the trade group’s legal campaign, which many music fans thought went too far.

“This ad shows how everything has changed,” said RIAA chief executive Mitch Bainwol. “The debate is not digital versus plastic, it’s legitimate versus illegitimate.”

The music industry blames a slump in overall music sales largely on file-sharing. In recent years, music and film companies have sued the firms behind the software used to swap files over the Internet. The music industry turned to suing individual downloaders last fall.

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cmyk



Jayne Quinn of West Gardiner, Maine, models a New England Patriots contact lens at her Hallowell, Maine office, Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2004. The lenses, available in all NFL club logos, cost around \$50. Quinn said she wears the lenses to support the Patriots, which play the Carolina Panthers in the Super Bowl on Sunday, in Houston. Quinn has been a Patriots fan since she was a child. She plans to wear the lenses until Sunday. "I'll wear them longer if they win," she said.

Vegas casinos cancel Super Bowl parties

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Casinos are canceling Super Bowl parties and handing out refunds to thousands of people after the NFL threatened legal action against some of the biggest hotels in Las Vegas.

Several hotels received letters this week informing them that their parties were "unauthorized use of NFL intellectual property." NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said the league recently became aware of these large-scale parties planned in Las Vegas and other locations around the country.

"These establishments were attempting to charge admission for

something we are offering for free, and we believe that's a violation of a long-standing NFL policy that specifically prohibits mass out-of-home broadcasts," McCarthy said.

A Super Bowl party inside a movie theater at the Palms was scrapped after the hotel received a letter from the football league on Jan. 23. The gathering usually attracts several hundred people, who enjoy hot dogs and beer and compete in games and raffle drawings for \$39.99.

The Aladdin hotel-casino had to cancel its bash planned at the hotel's 7,000-seat Theatre of Performing Arts

after receiving the letter Friday, less than 48 hours before the big game. Officials were scrambling to find small TVs that they could place throughout the casino for guests wanting to watch the Super Bowl.

McCarthy dismissed claims that Las Vegas was being singled out, saying the NFL had sent letters to several locations in Boston, Charlotte and Houston. He said the NFL sent a letter to a Boston aquarium just before the AFC Championship game advising them not to broadcast the game.

"When we become aware of a potential violation, we take action,"

McCarthy said. "It's not a city issue, it's a copyright issue."

The NFL's letter was particularly devastating to promoter Todd Krohn, who had organized a party at The Orleans hotel-casino that was expected to draw some 6,000 sports fans at \$45 a ticket. He estimated his company, The T & J Trust, lost more than \$100,000 as a result.

"Our biggest problem with this was the late notification. If the NFL had made this decision, why didn't they give us 30 days notice?" Krohn said. "We wouldn't have scheduled the event. We wouldn't have spent the money."

Iraq grants licenses to 3 foreign banks

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)—Iraq has granted the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corp., Standard Chartered and the National Bank of Kuwait licenses to operate in Iraq, according to a Central Bank statement issued Saturday.

The three can start operation by mid-March and not later than Dec. 31 this year.

A separate statement said the Central Bank will lift controls on interest rates starting March 1 as part of its efforts to "modernize and develop Iraq's financial system according to market principles."

The Central Bank said the three banks were among 15 financial institutions that applied for permits to operate in Iraq and that it was continuing to study their applications.

The Central Bank has invited international banks to apply for six, five-year licenses.

Central Bank Gov. Sinan al-Shibibi, speaking to Dow Jones Newswire from Geneva, said the three banks would start operations with a minimum capital of \$25 million. "The operation of these new foreign banks will improve Iraq's economy and will bring hard currency to the country," he said in a telephone interview.

Iraq's economy had for decades been centrally planned with Socialist-like restrictions on the transfer of capital, foreign exchange regulations and commerce in place since the 1960s.

Market mood swings with Fed statement

NEW YORK (AP)—To the untrained eye, it looked like good news: The Federal Reserve offered an upbeat assessment of the job market and left a key short-term interest rate at a historic low, saying it could afford to "be patient" with its policy.

But Wall Streeters were rattled by what the Fed didn't say—that it would leave rates low "for a considerable period," a line from previous statements that many interpreted as meaning a year or more. The idea that rates could rise as early as this spring or summer sent stock prices lower and bond yields higher, to the dismay of anyone shopping for a mortgage.

The obsession with a few words confirms that interest rates are a serious issue for the markets. The expected rise in the federal funds rate, now at a 45-year low of 1 percent, will dent corporate bottom lines by raising the cost of their debt, and decrease the underlying value of their stocks.

Concern about when the increase will come and how large it will be is likely to unnerve the markets further as investors try to anticipate the Fed's next move. But many economists say it's not that big a deal.

"I think people should make much less of this than what they've done," said Sherry Cooper, chief economist at BMO

Nesbitt Burns, who worked for the Fed from 1977 to 1982. "The difference to them between 'considerable period' and being 'patient' is not statistically significant. Patience is patience. No one can say how long it takes."

What it does mean, Cooper and other economists said, is that Fed chairman Alan Greenspan and other members of the central bank's Open Market Committee will be closely watching economic data, especially on inflation and the labor market. A lower-than-expected gross domestic product reading for the fourth quarter, released Friday, made some think it would be quite a while before a change is made.

ChevronTexaco's 4Q profit nearly doubles

SAN RAMON, Calif. (AP)—ChevronTexaco Corp.'s fourth-quarter profit nearly doubled, capping a year in which the oil giant cashed in on high fuel prices to snap out of a financial malaise.

The San Ramon-based company said Friday that it earned \$1.7 billion, or \$1.63 per share, during 2003's final three months. That marked a dramatic improvement from net income of \$904 million, or 85 cents per share, at the same time in the prior year.

Revenue for the quarter totaled \$30.5 billion, a 13 percent increase from \$27.1 billion in the comparable 2002 period.

The earnings exceeded the mean estimate of \$1.59 per share among analysts polled by Thomson First Call. If not for a series of one-time items, ChevronTexaco's fourth-quarter earnings would have been \$1.54 per share, said Oppenheimer & Co. analyst Fadel Gheit.

Investors appeared to zero in on the \$1.54 earnings figure, causing ChevronTexaco's shares to fall 96 cents Friday to close at \$86.35 on the New York Stock Exchange.

Much as it did throughout 2003, ChevronTexaco benefited from higher prices for oil, gasoline and natural gas, although the fourth-

quarter gains weren't quite as large as earlier in the year.

ChevronTexaco finished the full year with a profit of \$7.2 billion, or \$6.96 per share, a more than six-fold increase from net income of \$1.1 billion, or \$1.07 per share, in 2002. Revenue last year rose 22 percent to \$120 billion, up from \$98.7 billion in 2002.

The rising profits enjoyed by ChevronTexaco and other major oil producers during 2003 mirrored a sharp run-up in gasoline prices. Gas prices reached their highest levels in California, where ChevronTexaco is a market leader.

CORPORATE Roundup

Gateway to buy PC maker eMachines

SAN DIEGO (AP)—In its latest attempt to find profits in the notoriously low-margin personal computer business, Gateway Inc. will buy privately held eMachines Inc. in a deal valued at \$235 million.

The combined company would still trail Dell Inc. and Hewlett-Packard Co., but executives hope the increased volume will give it more leverage in negotiating with suppliers. A similar argument was made when HP announced it was buying Compaq Computer Corp. in 2001.

"There's an element of last man standing here," said Roger Kay, an analyst at the research firm IDC. "The PC industry is definitely consolidating and, at this stage, bulk counts."

Gateway and eMachines each had about 3.4 percent of the total U.S. market in the fourth quarter of last year, according to IDC. By comparison, Dell and HP commanded more than half.

US Steel reports \$27 million loss

PITTSBURGH (AP)—U.S. Steel Corp. reported a net loss for the fourth quarter following a year in which the company pared down its workforce and shed a money-losing online venture. But its sales jumped with the acquisitions of steel firms in the United States and Europe, and its stock price rose 4 percent.

The world's largest integrated steel company on Friday reported a loss of \$27 million, or 26 cents per share, in the last three months of 2003 compared with a profit of \$11 million, or 10 cents per share, for the same period in 2002. The loss includes dividend payments on preferred stock of \$5 million.

The consensus forecast of analysts surveyed by Thomson First Call was for a loss of 37 cents per share. U.S. Steel shares rose \$1.34 to close at \$34.05 on the New York Stock Exchange.

Revenues increased to nearly \$2.7 billion on the quarter from about \$1.9 billion a year earlier with the acquisition of Ohio's National Steel in May and Sartid in Serbia in September.

California to sue grocery chains

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The California attorney general's office plans to sue supermarket chains involved in a labor dispute with grocery workers, alleging the companies hurt consumers by forming a financial mutual aid pact.

Attorney General Bill Lockyer contends the companies' arrangement, which they made several weeks before entering collective bargaining with some 70,000 Southern California grocery employees, violates federal antitrust laws, particularly the Sherman Act.

The federal suit is aimed at Albertsons Inc.; Safeway Inc., which owns the Vons and Pavilions chains; and two chains run by Kroger Co.—Ralphs Grocery Co. and Food 4 Less Food Co. All the chains are in the pact, but Food 4 Less workers are not involved in the labor dispute.

Nation

Flights canceled amid new terror worries

By JENNIFER C. KERR
AP WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—Five U.S.-bound flights from Britain and France were canceled Saturday because of security concerns. The U.S. government said it had fresh indications of al-Qaida's continued interest in targeting commercial planes flying to the United States.

British Airways grounded the same flight scheduled Sunday and Monday from London's Heathrow Airport to Dulles International Airport outside Washington, as well as the return flights. Also canceled was a flight from London to Miami on Sunday.

Air France scrubbed the same flight set for Sunday and Monday from Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris to Dulles. As a result, the outbound flights were canceled.

A U.S. government official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said there were concerns about a handful of



British Airways aircraft are seen on the tarmac at London's Heathrow Airport's Terminal 4, in this Jan. 2, 2004 file photo.

flights on those foreign carriers and a U.S.-based airline that flies internationally. The official declined to identify the third carrier.

Officials from U.S. airlines

contacted Saturday that fly abroad said they were unaware of any security threats against their companies or of any flights canceled. Those carriers were American, Delta, United,

Northwest and US Airways.

"We continue to receive threat reporting that indicates al Qaida's desire to target international aviation," said Brian Roehrkasse, spokesman for the

Homeland Security Department.

Despite those threats, Roehrkasse said the department had no plans to raise the nation's terror alert level from yellow, or elevated risk of terrorist attack. Yellow is in the middle of the five-color coded scale.

The decision to cancel the flights was made jointly by the U.S., British and French governments, according to a senior U.S. law enforcement official speaking on condition of anonymity.

The U.S. government official said the threat information picked up by intelligence agencies

specifically mentioned British Airways flight 223 from London to Dulles; British Airways flight 207 from London to Miami; and Air France flight 026 from Paris to Washington.

An official close to French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin told The Associated Press that the Air France flights were canceled because of "serious threats." The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, declined to elaborate.

A British Airways spokeswoman said the airline acted on the advice of the British government.

Bush considers Iraq intelligence review

WASHINGTON (AP)—The White House is considering endorsing the creation of an independent commission that would investigate whether the United States used faulty intelligence information when it decided to go to war in Iraq, government sources said Saturday.

They said a statement of support from the White House could come this week.

Until now, President Bush has reacted coolly toward the idea of a new commission, refusing to endorse it publicly. But his administration is under mounting election-year pressure to agree to an independent inquiry about Iraq's alleged arsenal of banned destruction.

Vice President Dick Cheney has broached the possibility of a commission in conversations with members of Congress, according to government sources familiar with the conversations. These sources spoke on condition of anonymity.

Despite months of searching,

Pentagon's Wolfowitz defends war in Iraq

WUERZBURG, Germany

(AP)—The United States was justified in going to war against Iraq because Saddam Hussein violated U.N. resolutions ordering him to disarm, the Pentagon's second-in-command said Saturday.

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said flawed intelligence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction should be investigated, but the inability of inspectors to find such weapons did not mean

the war was unnecessary.

David Kay, the former chief inspector in Iraq, said this week he believes deposed Iraqi President Saddam probably did not have the stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons that President Bush claimed as justification for the invasion in March.

"You have to make decisions based on the intelligence you have, not on the intelligence you can discover later," Wolfowitz said, while visiting the headquarters of the Army's 1st Infantry Division.

The division is preparing to ship out beginning next week for Iraq, where it will replace the 4th Infantry Division in the dangerous north-central part of the country.

Wolfowitz said he retains confidence in American intelligence agencies, despite their apparent mistakes about Iraq's weapons programs. He said deposing Saddam was important to bring freedom to the Middle East.

U.S. inspectors have found no forbidden weapons in Iraq. Bush had cited the suspected weapons as a rationale for the war.

Bush, asked point-blank on Friday about a commission, declined to answer directly.

"I want the American people to know that I, too, want to know the facts," the president said.

He reaffirmed the

administration's position that the Iraq Survey Group, which is searching for weapons of mass destruction, should complete its work and then compare its results with the administration's prewar intelligence.

Bush was asked about that intelligence Saturday by a senator from his own party, at a meeting in Philadelphia of

congressional Republicans.

In response to the question from Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., Bush responded much the same as he did to reporters on Friday, saying he wants to get to the bottom of how accurate U.S. intelligence was about Saddam's weapons before the war, an administration official said on condition of anonymity.

John Kerry looks tough to beat in five states

WASHINGTON (AP)—John Kerry looks tough to beat in five Democratic presidential contests Tuesday, party strategists say, with dreams of a decisive sweep hinging on two states—South Carolina and Oklahoma.

The results of those two races may determine whether Kerry delivers a knockout punch, or a glancing blow. He would like to chase Wesley Clark and John Edwards from the race

Tuesday, then finish off a staggering Howard Dean four days later in Michigan.

Kerry, who won opening-round contests in Iowa and New Hampshire, hopes that his momentum overcomes the \$11 million in advertising that Clark, Edwards and Dean poured into the seven states while he was off the air, fighting for survival in Iowa.

Heading into a frantic weekend of campaigning, public

polls showed the Massachusetts lawmaker with a commanding lead in Missouri, Arizona and North Dakota—states with 143 delegates at stake. But pollsters working for the campaigns said the race was tightening in Missouri and Arizona.

Public polls were mixed in South Carolina, with one

showing Kerry and Edwards tied and another giving the North Carolina senator a lead. Internal campaign polls showed Edwards slightly ahead in the chase for 45 delegates.

In Oklahoma, where 40 delegates are up for grabs, polls showed Kerry, Clark and Edwards locked in a three-way race.



Kerry

virtue
cmyk

States weigh common terror database

By BRIAN BERGSTEIN
AP TECHNOLOGY WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—Although privacy worries led several states to pull out of a federally funded crime and terrorism database project, others are actively considering joining and thereby sharing information on their citizens, The Associated Press has learned.

Mark Zadra, chief investigator for Florida state police, which runs the Matrix project, said organizers have given presentations to more than 10 Northeastern and Midwestern states in recent weeks, arguing at each stop that the database is an invaluable law enforcement tool.

Officials in Iowa and North Carolina said Friday that they are

exploring the system. And documents obtained through a public-records request in Florida indicate Arizona and Arkansas also may have interest in the quick-access information repository, which combines state records with 20 billion pieces of data held by a private company.

For now, Matrix—short for Multistate Anti-Terrorism Information Exchange—involves Florida, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York and Michigan.

Utah's governor said Thursday that she was halting the state's participation, which was launched under her predecessor, and appointing a panel to examine security and privacy issues.

Another state once involved, Georgia, said Friday it is now

dropping out completely—after the AP confronted officials with documents indicating the state was continuing to participate despite a public proclamation to the contrary in October from Gov. Sonny Perdue.

Law enforcement officials say Matrix is an ultra-efficient way for investigators to get information about suspects that authorities previously had to obtain from disparate sources. They insist it includes only public records and does not make predictions about crime or terrorism.

But privacy advocates say Matrix gives law enforcement too much access to private details on millions of people, resembling the Pentagon terrorism data-mining program

that drew public rebuke and lost Congressional funding last year.

The likelihood of Matrix expansion remains hard to gauge.

Bill Shrewsbury, a vice president at Seisint Inc., the company that maintains the database, said he expects five or six more states to join the program, though he would not specify which ones.

"I've never shown it to any law enforcement people who didn't say: 'My goodness, this is unbelievable technology. It makes our job so much easier,'" said Shrewsbury, a former agent with Florida state police and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency.

He added, however, that if too much controversy follows the project, "all bets are off."

Second caller claims to be Ohio shooter

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)—A day after announcing that a 911 caller had claimed responsibility for a string of highway shootings, investigators said Saturday that a second man has stepped forward and threatened to attack police officers.

Investigators say they believe the man who called early Saturday morning is different from the man who repeatedly called 911 on Monday to claim responsibility for 20 shootings at cars, school buses and homes on or near a section of Interstate 270 south of the city. One person was killed in November.

"It's gonna get worse," the latest caller said. "I am intend to start shooting at the police now."

Sheriff's officials said they warned law enforcement officials around the state of the latest caller's threats, and that a task force on the shootings was taking both sets of calls seriously.

Sheriff's officials issued a press statement and released a tape of the roughly 50-second call on Saturday, but did not immediately respond to requests for more information.

On the tape, the caller sounds like he has a deep voice, and says he was committing the shootings because the police have "corrupted the world."

He tells the dispatcher, "Tomorrow, the whole world will see how Ohio is."

"They will?" the dispatcher asks.

The caller responds, "They will see my impact. Tomorrow, live."



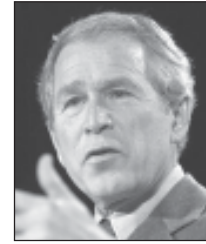
IN HIS ELEMENT

Biscuit, a seven-month-old snow leopard, romps in the snow at the Bronx Zoo Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2004 in New York. A Tuesday night snow storm added 5 to 10 inches of snow to the New York area.

Bush stresses fiscal restraint to GOP

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—President Bush stressed his commitment to fiscal restraint Saturday and gently urged congressional Republicans to line up behind his election-year agenda.

The speech at a Philadelphia retreat for GOP lawmakers clearly sought to quell worries from within his party over federal spending growth, pre-Iraq war intelligence and other issues.



Bush

"One clear signal we need to send to the American people and the markets is, 'We're going to be wise when it comes to the expenditure of the people's money,'" Bush said. "And we submitted a budget that says just that."

The president was heartily cheered as he entered the downtown hotel ballroom and was applauded a dozen times, including chants of "Four more years," in a 15-minute talk.

He came to Philadelphia with many conservatives angry about what they see as

the Bush administration's penchant for excessive spending and growth of government, exacerbated by a new cost estimate for recently passed Medicare legislation.

The administration's 10-year expense for the health program overhaul is \$534 billion, about one-third more than the projection the White House used—and which Bush insisted was the upper limit—during the difficult process of pushing the measure through Congress.

Bush is due to submit to Congress on Monday his \$2.3 trillion-plus spending request for the budget year that begins in October.

As a result, Bush spent much of his address emphasizing that he is committed to spending discipline and asking lawmakers to join him. That segment of his speech was the only one not peppered with applause.

"You spend, I propose—together we're responsible," he said.



Small plane goes down into Pacific Ocean

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A small plane crashed into the ocean Saturday morning about a half-mile from the Port of Los Angeles and divers were sent to search for the wreckage, authorities said.

It wasn't immediately known what type of plane it was or how many people were on board, said Art Marrujo, dispatch supervisor for the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

"We're very sketchy about the incident right now," he said. "We're still trying to find the wreckage."

There were no signs of survivors or wreckage, although an oil slick was visible on the surface, he said.

The plane went down around 10 a.m. between the Los Angeles Lighthouse and Cabrillo Beach, Marrujo said.

Another cow found from Canadian herd

MABTON, Wash. (AP)—Federal officials have so far found 29 of the 80 head of Canadian cattle that entered the United States in 2001 with a Holstein infected with mad cow disease.

The latest animal, which was located Thursday, would be euthanized after being tested, the U.S. Agriculture Department said Friday.

Investigators have been working to locate the cattle since the announcement Dec. 23 that a cow at a Mabton dairy farm had tested positive for mad cow disease. That cow was slaughtered Dec. 9.

The animal found Thursday

also was found in Mabton, but at a different farm, authorities said.

Mad cow disease eats holes in the brains of cattle and is incurable. It is a public health concern because humans can develop a brain-wasting illness, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, by consuming contaminated beef products.

Ariz. inmate hostage-taker seen with gun

BUCKEYE, Ariz. (AP)—One of two inmates holding a corrections officer hostage in a prison tower walked on the roof carrying what appeared to be a shotgun or rifle Saturday, the first time in the two-week standoff that either of the inmates had shown a weapon.

Prison officials said the action wasn't preceded by offensive action from SWAT teams or snipers.

"Only the inmate (knows) the motive for carrying the weapon," said Alan Ecker, a Corrections Department representative. He added that negotiations hadn't broken down to the best of his knowledge.

The inmate swung the weapon but never aimed it during the short time he walked on the roof. He gestured a couple of times, once appearing to wave in the direction of the media camped across the highway.

The inmates took two guards, a man and a woman, hostage on Jan. 18 at the Arizona State Prison Complex-Lewis, in Buckeye west of Phoenix. The man was released Jan. 24, and negotiations to release the woman have been continuing.

Man sought in suspected abduction found

WIND LAKE, Wis. (AP)—Hours after a woman called 911 saying her ex-husband had tied her up and put her in the back of his truck, police Saturday found the man and their two young daughters, but not his former wife.

The ex-husband had been seen towing the woman's car, which later turned up in Milwaukee, sheriff's officials said.

Between the calls to authorities and the divorced

couple's history of police intervention, Racine County Sheriff Bob Carlson said, "it doesn't give us a safe feeling."

David M. Larsen, 39, was arrested without incident in Wheeling, Ill., about 20 miles south of the state line, where he worked as an air traffic controller, Racine County sheriff's officials said.

Teri Jendusa-Nickolai, 38, and Saturday from his Wind Lake

residence, according to the Racine County Sheriff's Department.

Sheriff Bob Carlson announced that Larsen was apprehended in Wheeling, Ill., at 5:50 p.m. and taken into custody without incident, but the others were not with him.

The sheriff's department reported Saturday night that Amanda Larsen, 6, and Holly Larsen, 4, were found safe in Elmwood Park, Ill., after being

dropped off with a babysitter there by Larsen.

Larsen's ex-wife, Teri Jendusa-Nickolai, 38, had not been found.

Sheriff's Lt. Connie Mallwitz said authorities got a 911 call from a cell phone Saturday morning from a woman at Larsen's home in Wind Lake saying she was having trouble breathing, but rescuers found no one when they arrived.

Asia

Deadly Afghan blast likely an accident

By STEPHEN GRAHAM
AP WRITER

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—An arms dump blast that killed eight American soldiers was likely an accident, the U.S. military said Saturday, releasing the first results of an investigation into its worst ever loss of life here.

The soldiers died Thursday when a cache of mortar rounds and rifle ammunition discovered near Ghazni, about 90 miles southwest of Kabul, exploded.

Military spokesman Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty said the soldiers were preparing the weapons for disposal when one or more of them detonated.

“There was a single pop and then a much louder, much larger sympathetic detonation,” he said. “Initial indications are that it probably was an accident.”

The status of an eighth soldier listed as missing was changed to “presumed deceased,” Hilferty said Saturday, confirming the worse loss of life for U.S. forces

since they invaded in late 2001 to oust the Taliban regime for harboring Osama bin Laden.

Hilferty gave no further details on the explosion, saying the investigation was still in its early stages. He had said Friday that the military was still looking into whether the cache was set off by a booby-trap.

The U.S. military has said the soldiers were on a regular patrol. But in the United States, a sister of one of the dead soldiers said officers informed relatives that the troops were on a training exercise.

Penny Cockerell, of Dallas, said she was told that her brother, Sgt. Kyle Seitsinger, a 29-year-old Army Reserve sergeant attached to the 10th

Mountain Division, died when a mortar round exploded during the exercise.

Hilferty said several 10th Mountain soldiers were among the dead and that soldiers from other units also were killed. He declined to identify them further.

Afghan state TV broadcast a message of condolence from President Hamid Karzai to President Bush on Friday evening, calling it “another sacrifice of your soldiers for peace and stability in Afghanistan.”

Karzai: US airstrike killed 10 Afghans

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—An American airstrike in an Afghan village earlier this month killed 10 civilians, President Hamid Karzai said Saturday.

The U.S. military said it was studying results of an Afghan investigation into the Jan. 17 raid against suspected Taliban leaders

in southern Uruzgan province, but maintained that a warplane fired only on armed men.

President Karzai said Interior Ministry officials who traveled to the region some 250 miles southwest of the capital, Kabul, established that 10 civilians had died. At the time of the raid, local

officials had said that 11 civilians were killed: four men, four children and three women.

“There are casualties unfortunately, according to the report that I have received, of civilians, of children and men and women,” Karzai told reporters at his palace.

An American soldier in a humvee patrols a stretch of the remote and rugged mountains of Ghazni province, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) west of Kabul, Afghanistan, Friday, Jan. 30, 2004.

AP

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China announces a new case of SARS

By AUDRA ANG
AP WRITER

BEIJING (AP)—China announced its fourth confirmed SARS case of the season Saturday, saying the patient had already left the hospital after “total recovery”—a disclosure that prompted a strongly worded statement from the World Health Organization urging an urgent investigation.

The 40-year-old doctor fell ill on Jan. 7 with a high fever, sore throat and fatigue, the official Xinhua News Agency said. It cited an unnamed

spokesman from the Health Ministry.

The man—identified only by his family name, Liu—checked himself into a hospital Jan. 13, Xinhua said. Within five days, “his body temperature dropped to normal and his condition stabilized.” Liu “was already discharged from hospital several days ago upon total recovery,” Xinhua said.

The doctor, who works at a hospital in Guangzhou, the capital of the southern province Guangdong, denied having any contact with animals or SARS patients, the report said. Health officials have been monitoring 48

people who had contact with him, but none has showed any symptoms, it said.

Criticized for its sluggish, secretive response last year after the initial outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome, the Chinese government has vowed to be more open and has since mounted an aggressive campaign against the disease.

Daily reports on suspected or confirmed cases are issued by the Health Ministry, and Xinhua reported on the third patient’s release from the hospital minutes after it said it occurred.

According to Xinhua, Guangzhou

experts diagnosed Liu as a suspected case on Jan. 24 and the health ministry was informed two days later. It was not immediately clear why no word about him was released until Saturday.

“The case raises a number of concerns about the manner in which the man’s infection was detected, treated and reported,” the World Health Organization’s Beijing office said in a statement e-mailed to reporters Saturday night.

“WHO was not informed about this case until January 30,” the agency said. “Early detection, swift isolation and

prompt reporting of cases are vital in the control of any infectious disease.”

It said it was told about the case four days after the man was declared a suspected SARS patient and two weeks after he was isolated. WHO said it was “strongly recommending further investigation into the sources of infection of recent SARS cases in Guangdong.”

Telephones were not answered at the ministry, and an official at the Guangdong anti-SARS office in Guangzhou said he “wasn’t clear” about any details of the case. He refused to give his name.



South Korean Marine soldiers hurl snows each other during the winter exercise at the Yong Pyong, east of Seoul, Thursday.

US: N. Korea talks possible in Feb.

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—Washington’s point man for North Korea said Sunday that a fresh round of talks on the communist state’s nuclear standoff could open as early as February.

Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly, who arrived in South Korea on Sunday, said he was “mildly optimistic” about the prospects of six-nation talks.

We “may be able to have another round of six-party talks before very long. Perhaps even this month of February,” Kelly told reporters upon arrival in Seoul.

For months, the United States, China, Russia, Japan and South Korea have been trying to restart talks on persuading North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons programs. A first round ended in August in Beijing without much progress.

North Korea has insisted it needs nuclear weapons as a deterrent against a possible U.S. attack. But it says it will suspend its nuclear programs as a first step in talks if Washington lifts sanctions against the North, resumes oil shipments, and removes North Korea from its list of countries that sponsor terrorism.

The United States has responded that North Korea must first verifiably

US sees no future for reactor program

NEW YORK (AP)—The U.S.-run consortium that suspended construction of two nuclear reactors in North Korea met Friday to make sure preservation work at the site is going smoothly, and Washington reiterated it saw no future for the project.

The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization had been building the light-water reactors under a 1994 deal between the United States and North Korea. But the deal went sour last year after U.S. officials said North Korea admitted running a secret nuclear program in violation of international agreements.

The United States is now deadlocked with North Korea about how to proceed. The North has

proposed suspending its nuclear programs if Washington lifts sanctions against the communist state, resumes oil shipments, and removes the North from its list of countries that sponsor terrorism. The United States says North Korea must first verifiably begin dismantling its nuclear programs.

“As we have made clear, we see no future for the light water reactor project,” the U.S. State Department said in a statement after the KEDO executive board met at its headquarters in New York.

The consortium includes the United States, the European Union, Japan and South Korea. In November, it suspended work on the reactors for at least one year.

and other reconnaissance planes of the U.S. military were used to commit “round-the-clock” espionage.

The nuclear dispute flared in October 2002 when U.S. officials accused North Korea of running a nuclear weapons program in violation of a 1994 deal requiring the North to freeze its nuclear facilities.

ASIAN Briefs

Pakistan fires top nuclear scientist

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—In the first action from Pakistan’s probe into allegations of nuclear proliferation, the government on Saturday fired the revered founder of the country’s atomic program from his job as a top adviser and confined him to his home.

The moves against Abdul Qadeer Khan—considered a national hero for giving Pakistan its nuclear deterrent against India and the Islamic world its first atomic bomb—came as investigators narrow their pursuit of nuclear scientists’ black market ties to Iran and Libya.

Opposition Islamic parties called the action against Khan baseless and said they would take to the streets in protest against what they labeled yet another case of President Gen. Pervez Musharraf caving in to the West.

Khan hasn’t been placed under arrest, but authorities have told him to remain at his Islamabad home for security reasons and increased security around him, military spokesman Maj. Gen. Shaukat Sultan said. Six other scientists and security officials also have been detained.

S. Korean president replaces advisers

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—President Roh Moo-hyun replaced his national security aides Friday in a reshuffle triggered by a rift over his administration’s ties with the United States, South Korea’s biggest ally.

Kwon Chin-ho, a former deputy head of the National Intelligence Service, replaced Ra Jong-yil, who coordinates security-related issues for the president.

Roh also appointed a new national defense secretary, replacing Kim Hee-sang with Yoon Kwang-ung, a retired navy commander. The secretary post focuses mainly on military affairs.

With Friday’s reshuffle, Roh, who took office last February, has replaced most of his top security-related aides. The president’s office said there will be no change in the government’s foreign affairs and security policy.

Japan sends off troops leaving for Iraq

ASAHIKAWA, Japan (AP)—Hundreds of Japanese troops got a ceremonial send-off Sunday before leaving for Iraq on a humanitarian mission that will be the largest and most dangerous deployment by Japan’s military since World War II.

In a ceremony at a snow-draped base on the northern tip of Japan, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and senior defense officials addressed about 500 soldiers who will make up the core of a Japanese force on a non-combat operation to help rebuild Iraq.

“You are not going to war,” he told the rows of soldiers standing at attention in berets and camouflage. “You are going to help the people of Iraq in their hopes to rebuild their country.”

Some 650 family members and top government officials including Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi and Takenori Kanzaki, Koizumi’s coalition partner and key ally, attended the 30-minute ceremony.

Karzai: bin Laden alive, still in region

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Osama bin Laden is alive and may be hiding somewhere along the Afghan border, Afghan President Hamid Karzai said Saturday.

Also, a statement purportedly from fugitive Taliban chief Mullah Omar accused the U.S.-backed Afghan government of destroying Islamic values in Afghanistan and said the hard-line movement soon would triumph over U.S. forces.

“The spell of American oppression will be broken to pieces,” said the statement, which was faxed Saturday to The Associated Press in the Pakistani border city of Peshawar by Taliban spokesman Hamid Agha.

It was not possible to independently confirm the authenticity of the

statement, delivered ahead of the start of the Muslim holiday Eid al-Adha, or Feast of Sacrifice.

In his comments about the al-Qaida leader, Karzai said optimism among the U.S. military that he will be caught soon

means bin Laden is probably still in the region—maybe along the rugged Afghan-Pakistan border.

“His exact location is not known,” Karzai told reporters at his Kabul palace. “Inside or outside the (Afghan) border, it is not clear.”

Karzai said recent videos showing bin Laden demonstrated that he was still alive. “Everyone can see those videos,” he said.

The U.S. military said this week it is confident of catching bin Laden, as well as Mullah Omar, by the end of the year.



Karzai

World

Three US soldiers killed in Iraq blast



An Iraqi child named Radeef Muthana, 2-years-old, is held by a family member near the site of an explosion where he was injured near a house in Baghdad, Saturday Jan. 31, 2004. The bomb, which exploded under the car of police Col. Adnan Radeef al-Ani, who heads a quick response team, slightly injured five children in the street.

By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI
AP WRITER

MOSUL, Iraq (AP)—A bomb-laden car plowed through a razor wire fence and exploded outside a police station in the north of the country Saturday, killing nine Iraqis and injuring 45, including policemen there to pick up their pay.

In a separate incident, three U.S. soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division were killed Saturday in a roadside bombing near the northern oil center of Kirkuk. Their deaths brought to 522 the number of American service members who have died since the Iraq war began March 20.

It was unclear if the attack on the police station in Mosul was a suicide bombing or the driver fled before the explosion. U.S. officials have said recent vehicle bombings and suicide attacks in Iraq bear the mark of al-Qaida.

Late Saturday, a series of strong explosions could be heard in the center of Baghdad over a period of about two hours. It was unclear what caused the blasts, some of which were accompanied by bursts of automatic weapons fire.

A U.S. military spokesman, Capt. Dave Malakoff, said one of the blasts occurred in Baladiyat of eastern Baghdad, a Palestinian neighborhood. Malakoff had no further details, but a Palestinian resident, who refused to give his name, said rocket-propelled grenades were fired at an apartment house, causing “many” injuries.

Policeman Bassil Shehab, who suffered extensive facial burns and shrapnel injuries in the Mosul bombing, called the attack a “criminal act to kill innocent people. They have no religion, and no faith,” he said of the attackers. “Nothing will stop me

from going back to work even if something worse happens.”

Also Saturday, a bomb exploded under the car of police Col. Adnan Radeef al-Ani in front of his house in Baghdad, slightly injuring five children in the street. Al-Ani told The Associated Press the bomb apparently was triggered by a timer but no one was in the vehicle when it exploded.

In the southern Iraqi city of Basra, a remote-controlled bomb hit a car belonging to a Danish relief organization Danchurchaid on Saturday, wounding two aid workers and several Iraqis, according to the Danish group and military officials said.

A number of humanitarian groups withdrew their international staff after deadly bombings against the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations in Baghdad last year.

Nursing home fire in Scotland kills 10

UDDINGSTON, Scotland (AP)—Fire broke out at a southern Scottish nursing home early Saturday, killing 10 residents and injuring seven others, the fire service said.

It was one of the deadliest disasters at a British nursing home since the government began regulating the industry in the 1960s. Officials were still investigating the cause.

Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Minister Tony Blair issued messages of sympathy.

At least 40 people, many frail and ill, were in the RosePark

residence just south of Glasgow when the small blaze broke out shortly before 5 a.m., the Strathclyde Fire Brigade said. Spokesman Jeff Ord said the fire appeared to have started in a cupboard.

Chief Superintendent Tom Buchan, divisional fire commander for North Lanarkshire, said the fire caused only minor damage to the building.

“Indeed, if you see the building it is impossible to detect there has been any signs of fire at all,” he said. “It appears that the smoke has made its way along a residential area ... so the smoke

was able to enter their bedrooms where they were sleeping.”

Police initially said 11 people had died but later lowered the number to 10, citing a miscommunication between agencies.

“The thoughts of the entire country will be with the local community at this very difficult time,” Blair said in a statement issued by his Downing Street office.

Worried relatives gathered at a nearby police station seeking information about patients. Those who were not injured were moved to nearby nursing homes.

Top Saudi cleric assails terrorists

MOUNT ARAFAT, Saudi Arabia (AP)—Saudi Arabia’s top cleric called on Muslims around the world Saturday to forsake terrorism, saying those who claim to be holy warriors were an affront to the faith.

In a sermon that was remarkable not only for its strong language but also its timing—at the peak of the annual hajj—Sheik Abdul Aziz al-Sheik told 2 million pilgrims that terrorists were giving their enemies an excuse to criticize Muslim nations.

“Is it holy war to shed Muslim blood? Is it holy war to shed the blood of non-Muslims given sanctuary in Muslim lands? Is it holy war to destroy the possessions of Muslims?” he asked.

A large number of the victims of suicide attacks in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iraq and elsewhere have been Muslims.

Al-Sheik, who is widely respected in the Arab world as the foremost cleric in the country considered the birthplace of Islam, spoke at Namira Mosque in a televised sermon watched by millions of Muslims in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.

In speaking of terrorists who killed fellow Muslims, al-Sheik was clearly referring to the Prophet Muhammad’s final sermon, delivered on Mount Arafat 14 centuries ago.

It contained the line: “Know that every Muslim is a Muslim’s brother, and the Muslims are brethren. Fighting between them should be avoided.”

Al-Sheik also criticized the international community, accusing it of attacking Wahhabism, the sect whose strict interpretation of Islam is followed in Saudi Arabia.

“This country is based on this religion and will remain steadfast on it,” he said.

“Islam forbids all forms of injustice, killing without just cause, treachery ... hijacking of planes, boats and transportation means,” he said.

US stand on wall angers Palestinians

JERUSALEM (AP)—A top Palestinian official told a visiting U.S. envoy Saturday that Palestinians were angered over Washington’s opposition to an international court hearing on the Israeli barrier to seal off the West Bank.

The expansive complex of trenches, fences, walls and razor wire, has become one of the most contentious issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and both sides see the upcoming hearing as important to determining the project’s fate.

Palestinian Cabinet Minister Saeb Erekat told State Department official David Satterfield that Palestinian leaders were upset with a U.S. position that the International Court of Justice should not consider the legality of the Israeli-built barrier.

The United States is trying to “shut the door in our faces,” Erekat told The Associated Press.

The barrier is about one-quarter complete and will eventually stretch 440 miles. In some places its route roughly matches the West Bank boundary that Israeli forces crossed in the 1967 Mideast war. In others, it zigzags deep into West Bank land.

Israel says the barrier is crucial to stopping suicide bombers. The Palestinians say it’s a brazen move to grab land and to crush chances for an independent Palestinian state.

The court in The Hague, Netherlands, is to begin hearings on Feb. 23.

Both sides submitted arguments to the court by Friday’s deadline. Israel argued the judges have no jurisdiction, while the Palestinians said construction on occupied West Bank land is illegal.

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River barge sinks in northwestern Congo

By EDDY ISANGO
AP WRITER

KINSHASA, Congo (AP)—Nearly 200 people were missing after a barge caught fire and sank in a river in northwestern Congo, the United Nations said Saturday.

At least 301 of the nearly 500 people aboard the barge survived Monday's accident on the Congo River near the town of Lukelela, said Alexandre Essome, spokes-

man for the U.N. Mission in Congo in the northwestern city of Mbandaka. One person was confirmed dead and at least one other suffered severe burns, he said.

"We don't know what happened to the 200 who are missing," Essome told The Associated Press by telephone. "According to survivors, they could have returned to (the capital) Kinshasa or Mbandaka

... but it's also possible that the death toll will rise."

News of such tragedies often travels slowly in Congo because much of the vast country is comprised of jungles, dirt roads and villages with no communications or electricity.

The fire started after a technician trying to repair a broken motor inadvertently set off a spark near a fuel barrel, Essome said.

The blaze spread quickly

because most of the vessel was made of wood, forcing panicked passengers to jump into the Congo River and survivors to swim to shore.

The fire destroyed almost all the merchandise aboard, which included salt, food, fuel and live goats belonging to small Congolese traders.

"The villagers said they saw at least ... six bodies floating in the river, but we couldn't verify

that," Essome said.

The U.N. Mission in Congo on Friday dispatched two patrol boats and a helicopter to look for survivors and distribute emergency medical supplies, water and blankets, Essome said.

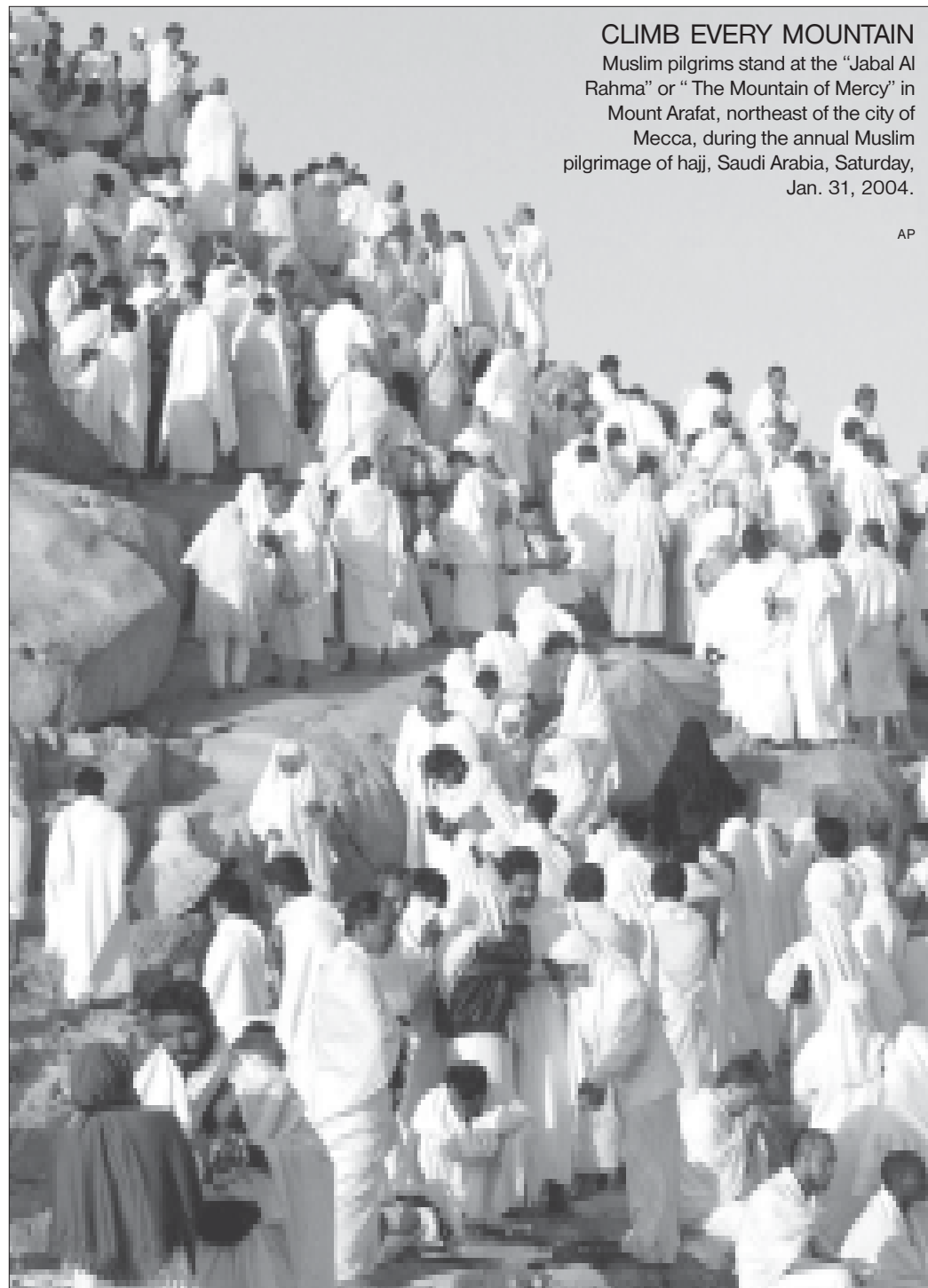
Lukelela, a village on the border with Republic of Congo, is about 250 miles northwest of Kinshasa. The village has no radios or telephones, Essome said.

The boat sank on an un-

inhabited part of the river, and survivors walked several hours to Lukelela, the nearest town, to call for help.

The ship's owner said the vessel was believed to be carrying 500 people when the tragedy occurred.

The United Nations said in a statement the barge was traveling from Makoti Mpoko in Republic of Congo and was headed north up the Congo river.



CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN
Muslim pilgrims stand at the "Jabal Al Rahma" or "The Mountain of Mercy" in Mount Arafat, northeast of the city of Mecca, during the annual Muslim pilgrimage of hajj, Saudi Arabia, Saturday, Jan. 31, 2004.

AP

Canada will probe US deportation case

TORONTO (AP)—Canada said Wednesday it will hold a full public inquiry into the deportation of an Ottawa engineer to Syria, where he says he was tortured—an incident that has rankled Canadian-U.S. relations.

Maher Arar, a Syrian-born Canadian, was detained by U.S. authorities in New York in 2002 while on his way home from a visit to Tunisia. Intelligence officials had raised suspicions about alleged links to al-Qaida.

U.S. authorities deported him to Syria, where he says he was tortured. Released Oct. 5 and now back in Canada, Arar has vehemently denied being a terrorist and has not been charged with any crime.

"I want the facts," Prime Minister Paul Martin said Wednesday. "I want to know exactly what did happen."

Arar, 33, welcomed the announcement as "a great day for Canadian justice."

"It is ... very important to ensure this inquiry can, indeed, clear my name and answer all of our questions so that we can begin to rebuild our lives," Arar said.

Justice Dennis O'Connor, an Ontario Court of Appeal judge,

was appointed to head the inquiry.

Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan said O'Connor "will assess the actions of Canadian officials in dealing with the deportation and detention of Maher Arar."

"He will have all the powers set out in the (Inquiries) Act, including the authority to hold public hearings, summon witnesses, compel testimony and to gather such evidence as needed to conduct the inquiry," said McLellan, who is also minister of public safety and emergency preparedness.

O'Connor will not be able to force U.S. authorities to participate in the inquiry. A public investigation into how intelligence on both sides of the border tracks suspected terrorists is not expected to be welcomed by Washington.

U.S. Ambassador Paul Cellucci insisted again Wednesday that U.S. officials acted alone when they decided to deport Arar.

"It is very clear that the decision to send Mr. Arar to Syria was made by the U.S. government without any consultation by Canada or anyone in the Canadian

government," Cellucci said.

The controversy surrounding the treatment of Arar has dogged Martin's government as well as that of his predecessor, Jean Chretien.

Canadian officials have said American authorities made a mistake in deporting Arar.

Martin had said he was awaiting the results of two separate inquiries, but recent events, including a raid by Royal Canadian Mounted Police on a journalist's home and office to trace a government leak in the case, brought the issue to a head.

A spokeswoman for Arar, who has consistently urged a public inquiry since he returned to Canada, said he would comment later Wednesday.

Arar has maintained his innocence, though he did acknowledge that he confessed under torture. He filed a lawsuit against Attorney General John Ashcroft and other top U.S. officials last week, alleging they knew he would be tortured when they deported him to Syria in 2002.

His lawyers already have filed a lawsuit against Syria and Jordan, where he was first sent from the United States.

Iran Cabinet delays election crisis talks

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—President Mohammad Khatami, suffering severe back pain, called off an emergency Cabinet meeting Saturday that was to deal with Iran's deepening crisis over parliamentary elections.

Earlier in the day, the pro-reform president had suggested his government would not go ahead with the Feb. 20 vote, which he called undemocratic because hard-line Islamic clerics have disqualified more than 2,400 liberal candidates.

"My government will only hold competitive and free elections ... the parliament must represent the views of the majority and include all (political) tendencies," Khatami

said, according to the official Islamic Republic News Agency.

Hours later, doctors confined Khatami to his home for treatment of what a senior presidential aide told The Associated Press was a longtime back problem exacerbated by stress.

Iran's main reformist party was swift to emphasize that the president's ailment would not slow its moves to protest a vote it considers a sham. The Islamic Iran Participation Front has called a meeting Monday and is expected to announce a boycott of the polls.

"The president's physical condition may delay some consultations at the top level of

the Iranian leadership, but it will have no effect on the political parties or reformist lawmakers," a top party official, Saeed Shariati, told AP.

Nearly all of the Front's candidates have been barred from running in the election—some of them sitting lawmakers, including party chief and deputy speaker of parliament Mohammad Reza Khatami, also the president's brother.

The furor over the vote—Iran's biggest political crisis in years—started when the 12 clerics of the unelected but powerful Governing Council disqualified more than 3,600 of the 8,200 people who filed papers to stand for election.

Peru orders house arrest for ex-adviser

By DREW BENSON
AP WRITER

LIMA, Peru (AP)—A judge ordered house arrest on Saturday for a former presidential adviser who secretly met two years ago with a fugitive army general wanted on corruption charges.

The order came out a day after RPP radio released parts of an audiotape of a December 2001 conversation between President Toledo's then-adviser Cesar Almeyda and Gen. Oscar Villanueva, who later committed suicide.

A week of allegations about the tape sent Peru's media and political class into a frenzy and created another scandal for Toledo, whose approval rating is down to 10 percent in recent polls.

Compounding the presidential headache, Vice President Raul Diez Canseco—himself facing a congressional corruption investigation—announced his

resignation just as RPP aired snippets of the poor-quality audiotape.

Earlier in the week, Toledo said he had no knowledge of his then-adviser's meeting.

According to the tape, a transcript of which was published in the opposition tabloid Correo on Saturday, Almeyda and Villanueva discussed which three judges might hear the general's case. Villanueva asked if it would be possible to "negotiate" with one of them.

"They are confirming it for me," Almeyda said without elaborating to whom he was referring. "I'm not completely sure, but I have the other two more or less under control."

Almeyda said in a midnight press conference that the tape should be studied by experts. He said he met with the general—who was apparently seeking protection in exchange for information—to advise him about how to collaborate with investigators.

The general had been

accused of handling illegal funds for former President Alberto Fujimori's former intelligence chief Vladimiro Montesinos. Montesinos dragged down Fujimori's decade-long regime in November 2000 when he was caught on video bribing a congressman.

Toledo has been on the defensive for months, confronted with a string of unrelated scandals that have forced out three Cabinet ministers since December.

Vice President Diez Canseco, whose resignation needs to be approved by Congress, stepped down as the minister of foreign trade and tourism in November, amid charges that he gave a tax break to his girlfriend's father.

Since taking office in 2001, Toledo's approval rating of nearly 60 percent has plummeted amid criticism that he was an indecisive leader unable to deliver on promises to create jobs.

Health & Fitness

Life & Style

Etiquette when encountering a friend in legal trouble

By PAT SEREMET
THE HARTFORD COURANT

Call it dread-i-quette.

You're in an elevator, the doors part, and in steps someone who lives in your building who's been found guilty of fraud, tax evasion or laundering, and we don't mean socks.

You're at a restaurant, and you see someone you know, but not well, who is awaiting sentencing for bribery and embezzlement.

Your friend got caught up in a public scandal and is given a lighter sentence of home confinement and electronic monitoring.

How do you handle such uncomfortable situations? What do you say or do? Or do you stand there, sweat and stutter, then walk away?

It's a relatively new, squeamish question that not even the savviest etiquette rule-dispensers have yet addressed. But with white-collar crime on the increase—it's been called "the crime of choice of baby boomers"—and high-profile people heading for the courts in droves (Enron, Qwest, WorldCom, ImClone, anyone?), it's worth taking the topic out of the closet, you know, the one with all those white shirts.

Even if a person only is being investigated for possible misdeeds, it creates a touchy situation for friends and allies as to how to respond.

Although nearly 75 percent of white-collar crimes are committed by men, according to the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners' 2002 Report to the Nation, this week it is Martha Stewart, the essence of femininity, who is being tried on counts of conspiracy, securities fraud and obstruction of justice.

Before we hear from the etiquette experts, there's author and television show host Dominick Dunne, who doesn't need to ask anybody what's the right thing to do or say to his friend Stewart.

"I'm sticking by her," Dunne said, "and I'm quite open about it. People tend to not call when somebody's in trouble, but I do. And there are a lot of people in trouble."

Although she did not

address this moral dilemma in her most recent tome, "Letitia Baldrige's Complete Guide to the New Manners for the '90s," she plans to include it in her new encyclopedia of etiquette. Under "P" she plans to tackle "prison, and how to handle a friend who's in there."

It's a discomfiting question that people in Baldrige's strata of society—she was Jacqueline Kennedy's chief of staff—seldom had to consider.

She recalls that, as a child, her family knew one person in town who went to prison.

"It was terrible," she said. "The town stopped living. Now it's become so common."

Her advice is for a friend to "immediately reach out, write a comforting letter."

"When you see him, say, 'I'm sorry, I'm truly sorry,'" Baldrige said. "Reach out; be kind; pat his arm. Tell him, 'You're going to get through it.' He thinks none of his friends care. He feels excluded and ostracized."

Peter Post, director of the Emily Post Institute in Burlington, Vt., who said he's never been asked this modern-day etiquette question, advises one to tell a friend who's in legal trouble: "I'm your friend; I continue to be your friend" and "I'd love to help you out and help the family."

But that is only if you really know the person, he warned.

"We tend to insert ourselves more than we need to," Post said. "Best to be less intrusive than more intrusive. I'm not convinced it's always our role to jump in and express sorrow. Take your lead from the person."

Avoid making remarks like "Boy, did you get railroaded," Post said.

"Do not make a joke about it," said Andrea Obston, who runs a communications business in Bloomfield, Conn. "Do not blame it on the media. And don't pump them for information."

"Whatever you think of what they've done, it's a crisis in their life," she said. "You don't have to say you're with them or against them. It's not a parlor game."



Harth

Carnegie Hall artistic director dies at 47

NEW YORK (AP)—Robert Harth, who became the head of Carnegie Hall days after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks and led America's premier classical music venue into an adventurous new era, has died. He was 47.

The hall's executive and artistic director had a heart attack Friday at his apartment near the hall, Carnegie spokeswoman Ann Diebold said.

Harth had planned to announce the hall's new season on Tuesday, including the second year of programs at the Judy and Arthur Zankel Hall, the \$72 million, 644-seat hall that sealed Harth's reputation as a cutting-edge arts administrator.

Harth spearheaded an eclectic blend of programming at Zankel, from new classical compositions, jazz and rock to avant-garde theater that drew a wider audience than usually attends Carnegie performances.

"Robert created a different atmosphere—much more relaxed," said mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne.

"He was so incredibly enthusiastic! He had a great spirit that permeated everything at Carnegie Hall," she said, remembering a moment at Zankel's inaugural concert when Cuban jazz pianist Omar Sosa tossed seashells onto the piano strings.

Harth is survived by his companion, Stacey Buck; his parents, Sidney Harth and Teresa Testa Harth; sister Laura Harth Rodriguez; and his son, Jeffrey Curtis and former wife Melanie Harth.

Mural focuses on missing Mexican women

By LAURA WIDES
AP WRITER

LOS ANGELES (AP)—In one image, a young girl cowers under a blanket below dark phantoms. Another depicts the Virgin Mary, and still another shows a skull with flowing black hair dotted with roses.

All are part of a mural Amnesty International unveiled Thursday honoring hundreds of missing and murdered women in Juarez, Mexico, in a case that activists say has been largely ignored by Mexican authorities.

Organizers hope the mural painted by graffiti artists will boost interest in a Valentine's Day march in Juarez to protest the slayings.

Jane Fonda, Sally Field and Christine Lahti are among the celebrities who have agreed to attend the march south of the border near El Paso, Texas.

"I'm going to help bring attention to the 300 women victims who were murdered, tortured, raped and disappeared in Juarez, and to ensure the perpetrators will be brought to justice," Fonda said.

Mexican authorities estimate nearly 300 women have been killed in the last



Actress Selma Hayek walks past one section of a 40-foot mural while viewing "Beyond Graffiti", Thursday, Jan. 29, 2004, at an art space called "Headquarters" in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles. The exhibit is in honor of the disappeared and murdered women of Juarez Mexico.

decade in the border town. Amnesty International puts the number closer to 400. Most victims were poor and ranged in age from 14 to 20.

Police have convicted only one man in the crimes, and their investigations have been criticized by Mexico's National Human Rights Commission.

"When we first started talking about it, I didn't know all the crazy facts," said an artist who goes by the name Axis, one of four people commissioned to do the 8-by-40-foot mural at an art space near Hollywood Boulevard.

"Then we each read about the killings, and it's still hard to believe stuff

like this is happening," he said.

The march in Juarez is co-sponsored by Amnesty International and the nonprofit V-Day Foundation, led by playwright Eve Ensler, author of the play "The Vagina Monologues." The foundation combats worldwide violence against women.

Amnesty also has presented scarves printed with images of victims' hands to actresses who pledged their support, including Salma Hayek. Several plays and documentaries have told the stories of the families. More film projects are in the works.

"I hope my involvement helps draw attention to this abominable act of violence against defenseless women to create more pressure to put an end to it," said Hayek, who met with the mural artists Thursday.

Earlier this month, Mexico's attorney general announced the creation of a special prosecutor's office to investigate the killings. Organizers of the upcoming march believe more public pressure is needed.

"The more people we get into the streets of Juarez on Feb. 14th, the more possible justice will be," Ensler said.

A touch of Angel Wings

The Angel Wings Bar and Restaurant in Garapan is repositioning itself with a series of special nights for its select clientele.

This comes with the recent arrival of new male entertainers from Manila who will be its featured guests in its Rainbow Night specials.

Every Wednesday and Thursday, the bar and restaurant will have a Ladies Night, while Fridays will feature Big Night. Saturday nights will be reserved for members of the rainbow community, while Mondays, Tuesdays and Sundays will feature regular entertainment.

The Angel Wings Bar and Restaurant is open everyday, with restaurant hours from 6pm to 9pm and bar hours from 9pm to 2am.

The bar and restaurant is located in the Garapan area, next to Bud's Bar and Abby's. For more information, call 2331914/2331947.

Bride has second thoughts about second time around

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEARABBY: I am engaged to be married on Valentine's Day. He is a wonderful man; we have been together for three years. It will be the second marriage for both.

I really like this man. He's funny, witty and kind. He loves me and my children, and they love him very much.

My problem is I do not feel that we're soul mates. Is this just a fantasy? What if I'm making another mistake? I don't want to hurt anyone, but I can't help feeling that since I don't feel butterflies after being with him for more than three years, something is missing.

Am I being silly or looking for something that does not exist?
STILL LONELY IN THE MIDWEST



Dear Abby

DEAR STILL LONELY: The thing about "butterflies" is, if you don't catch them and mount them, they tend to fly away. I often suspect that when people talk about butterflies, they are describing a mixture of anxiety and excitement otherwise known as infatuation - which isn't permanent.

However, if you truly feel lonely when you're with this funny, witty, kind and likable man, after three years of dating, then he isn't the life partner for you. Let him go. It wouldn't be much of a marriage if you felt you were in solitary confinement.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I'm getting married in the summer. Everything is great except for one issue that is about to explode. I have two nieces, 3 and 8, who will be flower girls along with a third girl. My fiancée wants the girls to be taken to another room with a baby sitter after the ceremony and cocktail hour.

I fear an ugly scene because my older niece and I have a special relationship, and she loves weddings. My family would like her to stay for the reception.

It's the bride's day, of course, and I want her to have the wedding of her dreams. How should I handle this?

GROOM-TO-BE WHO NEEDS HELP

DEAR GROOM-TO-BE: Handle it firmly. The wedding is not only the bride's day, it is also your day. While I understand the wisdom of the small children being entertained separately, the 8-year-old should be mature enough to behave properly at the celebration. Since you want her there, she should not be excluded.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My 10-year-old son is extremely sensitive. The kids in his class know it and love to pick on him. I've talked to his teacher, but she can't seem to catch them in the act.

I don't know what else to do. He is becoming depressed and eating less and less. I'm worried about him, but I don't know what to tell him to make him feel better. How can I help him?

CARING MOTHER IN GEORGIA

DEAR MOTHER: Get your son involved in outside activities and give him a chance to cultivate new friends who haven't been influenced by his classmates. This will also give him a chance to excel at something that interests him. Being bullied is something that can affect a person's self-image for many years. Some sessions with a counselor to help him build self-esteem may also be in order.

P.S. Most important, notify the school principal, who can and should implement a "zero tolerance" policy toward bullying.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS, and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)

LA home of ex-Jackson producer searched

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Authorities searched the home of one of Michael Jackson's former music producers for an hour Saturday but refused to disclose how or even if the search was connected to the sex abuse charges the entertainer is facing.

Sheriff's investigators from Santa Barbara County, where

Jackson's case is unfolding, searched the Calabasas residence of Marc Schaffel between 3 and 4 in the afternoon, said John Caffrey, a deputy with the Los Angeles County sheriff's department. The home is in Los Angeles County.

Schaffel, who produced Jackson's song "What More Can

I Give" two years ago, was not at home during the search, "Entertainment Tonight" reported on its Web site.

The producer has an unlisted telephone number and could not be reached immediately for comment.

Santa Barbara County sheriff's spokesman Sgt. Chris Pappas

declined to say whether a search warrant was executed, citing a gag order issued in the case.

Jackson has pleaded not guilty to seven counts of lewd or lascivious acts with a child under 14 and two counts of giving the child an "intoxicating agent," reportedly wine. He is free on \$3 million bail.



Entertainers, from left, P. Diddy, Janet Jackson, Nelly, and Kid Rock do their own thing following a photo opportunity for the media in Houston on Thursday, Jan. 29, 2004.

Mystery act to perform at Super Bowl

HOUSTON (AP)—Janet Jackson, Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, Kid Rock and Nelly apparently weren't enough for the 12 1/2-minute Super Bowl halftime show.

Another act is poised to join the MTV-produced extravaganza. Who that is will remain a mystery until the program, producers said Thursday. The New England

Patriots and the Carolina Panthers play Sunday in Reliant Stadium.

The halftime production will require 350 local volunteers to haul and assemble 70 pieces of the stage, which spans 120 feet. Then about 2,500 youngsters from area schools will pour onto the field to create a festival concert atmosphere.

Combs said that as big a deal as the halftime show has become, the musicians are just a sideshow.

"This is all about the players," he said. "We're here to fill some time while they get ready for the second half."

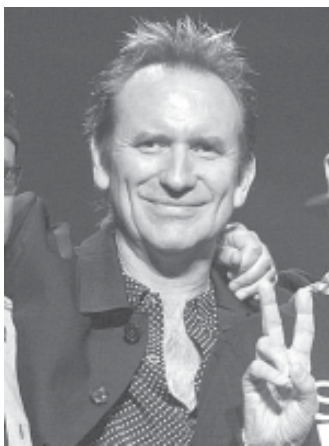
The game will air on the CBS television network.

Men at Work frontman back at work

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The man is back at work. Colin Hay, the frontman for the 1980s Australian band Men at Work, said he is launching his longest North American solo tour in more than a decade.

The series of more than 60 concerts started in San Juan Capistrano, Calif., on Thursday with plans to run through October, hitting cities including Chicago, Philadelphia, Atlanta, New York and Nashville.

Hay showcases his new songs along with old hits like "Down Under," "Overkill" and "Who Can It Be Now?" in



Colin Hay is seen in Orillia, Ontario, Canada in this, July 23, 2003 file photo.

acoustic-heavy performances that blend music with comedy and storytelling.

"The idea is to bring the past up to the present and then we can move on from there, hopefully," Hay told The Associated Press on Friday.

That's the philosophy he employed on his last album, "Man (At) Work," which was aimed at new fans while still satisfying the longtime Men at Work stalwarts.

"I have very good relationships with those old songs. They've been very good to me. We look after each other very well," Hay said.

'Jeopardy!' host Alex Trebek in car crash

TEMPLETON, Calif. (AP)—"Jeopardy!" host Alex Trebek escaped injury when he apparently fell asleep at the wheel of his pickup truck, sideswiped a string of mailboxes and sailed over an embankment into a ditch, authorities said.

Trebek, 63, was driving alone on a rural road Friday and his truck was airborne for about 40

feet, California Highway Patrol Officer Scott Koolman said.

Trebek owns and manages Creston Farms, a horse breeding and training farm about 10 miles southeast of Templeton on the central coast. An employee there said he wasn't aware of the accident.

"I don't know how he's doing because I haven't heard

anything about it," farm manager Art Mercado said.

A message left after business hours for "Jeopardy!" senior producer Rocky Schmidt was not immediately returned.

The Canadian-born Trebek has been host of the popular quiz show "Jeopardy!" since 1984. He also hosts the annual National Geographic Bee.

Jamie Foxx gets probation for fight

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Comedian Jamie Foxx has been placed on two years probation and fined \$1,500 after pleading guilty to a misdemeanor charge stemming from an altercation with security guards at a casino.

Foxx entered the plea Wednesday to disturbing the peace, District Attorney Eddie Jordan announced Friday. Foxx was given a six-month suspended jail sentence in addition to the probation and fine.

The entertainer's sister, Deidre Dixon, pleaded guilty to a felony count of battery on a police officer with injury and to misdemeanor charges of disturbing the peace and resisting arrest.

She was given a suspended sentence of five years in prison for the felony and one year suspended for the misdemeanors. She was placed on five years probation.

Criminal District Judge Frank Marullo fined Dixon \$1,500 and ordered her to pay \$13,000 in restitution to the officers involved.

As part of the plea agreement, prosecutors dismissed two felony battery counts against Foxx and one count against Dixon.

Pastimes

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

50TH QUEBEC WINTER CARNIVAL Solution: 8 letters

H	T	N	E	V	E	E	T	A	K	S	S	A	P	Y
G	N	I	H	S	I	F	E	C	I	L	R	S	A	R
I	O	E	G	N	W	S	A	H	I	U	N	L	E	A
E	G	N	R	E	O	H	I	D	O	O	P	H	D	U
L	O	L	E	D	S	I	I	T	W	R	T	B	A	R
S	L	K	O	R	L	N	T	Y	O	A	S	E	R	B
S	S	Y	A	O	G	I	O	I	E	R	L	E	A	E
F	C	G	N	Y	S	G	H	W	T	I	S	K	P	F
E	U	U	T	O	N	O	C	C	B	E	L	T	C	N
S	E	I	L	I	M	A	F	O	C	A	P	H	A	O
T	C	D	N	P	B	E	M	A	D	A	T	M	N	M
I	I	E	C	I	T	W	R	U	A	E	S	H	O	W
V	V	O	N	S	O	U	V	E	N	I	R	T	E	C
E	L	C	O	N	C	E	R	T	C	E	B	A	L	L
D	E	L	S	G	O	D	E	E	E	M	A	G	E	

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Ball, Belt, Cabin, Canoe, Castle, Ceremony, Children, City, Cold, Competition, Concert, Dance, Dogsled, Evening, Event, Families, February, Festive, Game, Guide, Horse, Ice fishing, Igloos, Logo, Menu, Parade, Pass, Play, Races, Sculpture, Show, Skate, Sleigh, Sliding, Snowbath, Snowmobile, Snowy, Songs, Souvenir, Sugar shack, Tent, Tour, Visitors, Walk, Weather, Weeks.

Last Saturday's Answer: Podium

NOTE: Postage and handling charges have changed for The Collected Wonderword. Add \$5 for the first book ordered, \$1 more for each additional book. Volumes 17 and 18 are \$5.95 each, payable to Universal Press Syndicate. Send to WONDERWORD, 4520 Main St., Kansas City, Mo. 64111 or call toll-free 1-800-225-6754, ext. 4615.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 "What Kind of Fool —?"

4 Wrist bones

9 Visibility hindrance

12 Junior, usually

13 Gibson garnish

14 Internet address

15 Apiary structure

17 Modern (Pref.)

18 Marseilles monarch

19 Hitherto

21 Forensics practice

24 Alluring

25 Eskimo knife

26 Remnant

28 Actress Winger

31 Behave

33 Highlander's cap

35 Fuel material

36 "War of the Worlds" result

38 Shrill bark

40 Zero

41 Bygone times

43 Avaricious

45 Religious retreat

47 Apprehend

48 Miss Piggy's pronoun

49 Item for one who's strapped for cash?

54 Below par

55 Babble on

56 Meadow

57 Scale note

58 Ecclesiastical council

59 Teeny tale

2 Bovine pro-nounce-ment

3 B&B

4 Road

5 Really old

6 Carnival city

7 Apples and pears

8 Rooted by heredity

9 Ulnar nerve area

10 Sandwich cookie

11 Radiate with light

16 Pitching stat

20 Part of CEO

21 Trash area

22 Director Kazan

23 Amateurs' ski slope

27 Calendar square

29 Incursion

30 Role for Calista

32 A-line creator

34 Ignition-current generator

37 Writers' woes

39 Asked the Almighty

42 Atlanta university

44 Undergo recession

45 Writer Kingsley

46 Unaccompanied

50 Bread of Indian cuisine

51 2003 Will Ferrell movie

52 Mainlander's memento

53 Bill

DOWN

1 Shade of blond

31 Highland-er's cap

33 Fuel material

36 "War of the Worlds" result

38 Shrill bark

40 Zero

41 Bygone times

43 Avaricious

45 Religious retreat

47 Apprehend

48 Miss Piggy's pronoun

49 Item for one who's strapped for cash?

54 Below par

55 Babble on

56 Meadow

57 Scale note

58 Ecclesiastical council

59 Teeny tale

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42 Atlanta university

44 Undergo recession

45 Writer Kingsley

46 Unaccompanied

50 Bread of Indian cuisine

51 2003 Will Ferrell movie

52 Mainlander's memento

53 Bill

Solution time: 24 mins.

D	N	A		W	I	S	P		C	R	A	B		
R	O	B		A	N	N	E		H	A	L	O		
A	V	E		D	O	U	R		A	C	E	D		
T	A	L	K		I	N	G		T	U	R	K	E	Y
					I	N	E		A	M	O			
P	R	O	N	G		M	I	A		A	B	A		
O	I	N	K		B	I	N		E	R	R	S		
D	O	E		P	O	X		W	R	E	A	K		
				A	I	R		C	H	I				
R	U	B	B	E	R	C	H	I	C	K	E	N		
A	C	R	E		O	L	A	N		I	R	E		
C	L	O	T		W	I	F	E		L	I	E		
Y	A	L	W	S		S	P	E	D		N	E	D	

Saturday's answer 2-2

STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5951 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY
Farrah Fawcett, Tom Smothers, Christie Brinkley, Graham Nash

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Brace yourself for change. You will have to accept what is going on around you and maneuver through the turbulence being cast your way. You will start to see a marked improvement during the last quarter of the year. Your numbers are 2,16,21,25,32,43

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)
You can make some personal changes that will ensure a better future. A different group of people will have a lasting effect on your approach in the future. Adaptation will equal something very special. ☺☺☺☺



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
Someone may try to convince you to invest in something that is not to your advantage. Focus more on what you are doing currently rather than looking for easy money. ☺☺☺



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
You are likely to have the wrong impression about someone. Don't jump to conclusions. Ride out the storm and you will not encounter the discord of jealousy or thoughtlessness. ☺☺☺



CANCER (June 21-July 22)
Don't let everyone in on your secrets. The more you reveal, the more you will have to worry about in the future. The changes you make may not be liked by everyone. ☺☺☺



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
You can enjoy the company of the people you meet if you get involved in organizations you believe in. Your leadership qualities will not go unnoticed, and you will be admired for your tenacity. ☺☺☺☺



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
This is not the day to ruffle feathers or get involved in something you can do nothing about. You will face opposition no matter which way you turn. Interfering be a waste of time and energy. ☺☺



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
Learning and interacting with knowledgeable people should be your goal. The more you can do with others, the further ahead you'll get. The possibility of striking up a good connection looks promising. ☺☺☺☺☺



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
You may not be on top of your money matters today. Make sure you have the funds before making a big-ticket purchase. Don't be too proud to accept sound advice. ☺☺☺



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
You can expect to face all sorts of little problems today. Don't push your luck when dealing with others. Complaints can be expected and patience will be needed. ☺☺☺



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
How you deal with your colleagues will be the barometer for your success. Your confident approach to everything you do will bring you added popularity. ☺☺☺



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
Brainstorm with friends. Experiment with your looks, and you will improve your image and gain plenty of attention. Romance will be calling. ☺☺☺☺☺

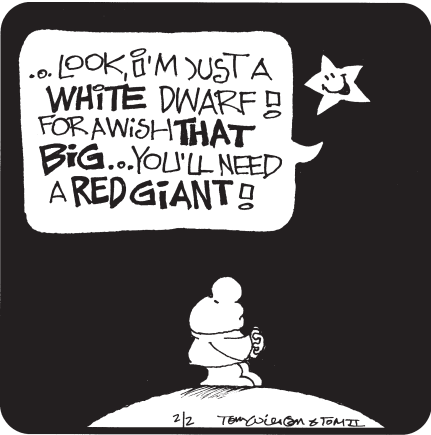


PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
Proceed with caution, especially if you have to work alongside others. You are likely to face some problems with a loved one. Changes made today will be costly. ☺☺

BIRTHDAY BABY: Your fidgety personality will lead you down many different pathways throughout life. Sitting still and listening to what others have to say will be your toughest lesson. As long as you are constructive in your approach, success will be yours.

(Need advice? Check out Eugenia on the Web at www.astroadvice.com or www.eugenialast.com.)

Ziggy®

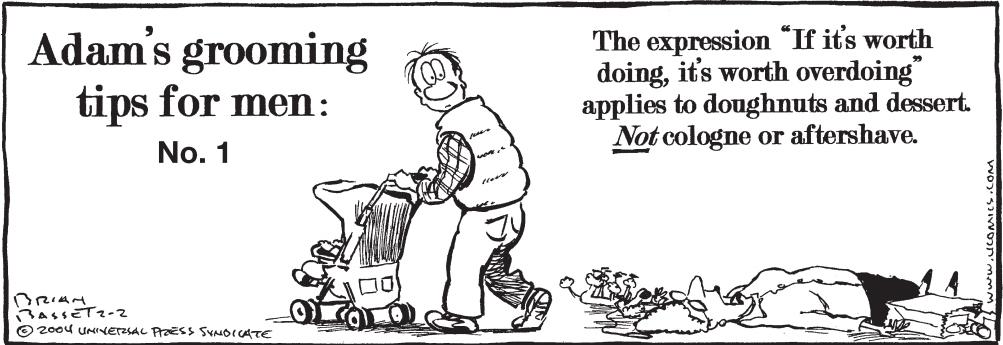


Calvin and Hobbes



Adam@home

By Brian Basset



Garfield®

by Jim Davis



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



Team Standings		
Group A		
SIP-Verizon	4	0
Bayani	2	2
SMF	2	2
CCA	2	2
MDX	0	4
Group B		
Visminda	4	1
Cabalen	4	1
Mobil-LIPS	4	1
Bicol	1	3
MIFICPA	1	3
Samahang Laguna	0	5



Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	T
Yankees	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	1	7
Academy	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	2	1	8

SPORTS BRIEFS

Kwame Brown leads Wizards past Pacers



WASHINGTON (AP)— Kwame Brown had a career-high 25 points and nine rebounds Saturday as the Washington Wizards shot 63 percent in the first half and held on to beat the Indiana Pacers 107-96.

"It's coming together," said Brown, the top pick straight out of high school in the 2001 draft. "I'm a lot more comfortable. Not as jittery, taking my shots when I have it."

Brown made eight of 12 shots, nine of 10 free throws and had the better in a matchup against fellow straight-out-of-high-schoolers Jermaine O'Neal and Al Harrington. Brown, who has struggled for consistency over much of his career, is averaging 13 points and 7.8 rebounds over his last 11 games.

"Let's see some consistency," Washington coach Eddie Jordan said. "We're not going to gloat. We love what happened tonight. We're not going to say he's arrived, because it's all about consistency."

Steve Blake added a career-high 18 points for the Wizards, who never trailed and have won three of four.

Harrington scored 21 points for the Pacers, who were done in by poor outside shooting as they lost their second game in as many nights following a five-game winning streak. Indiana was 1-for-14 from 3-point range at one point in the fourth quarter and finished 5-for-22.

Warriors 105, Trail Blazers 87

In Portland, Oregon, Jason Richardson scored 31 points, including seven 3-pointers as Golden State beat Portland to end a 12-game road losing streak.

Erick Dampier added 20 rebounds and 18 points, and Speedy Claxton had 15 points, seven assists and five steals.

Zach Randolph had 23 points and seven rebounds for the Trail Blazers, while Rasheed Wallace added 13 points and nine rebounds.

Darius Miles played for the first time since being traded to the Trail



Blazers by Cleveland for guard Jeff McInnis and center Ruben Boumtje Boumtje. Miles scored 12 points in 20 minutes.

Heat 85, Knicks 77

In New York, Eddie Jones scored 26 points and added six assists as Miami handed New York its first loss at Madison Square Garden under coach Lenny Wilkens.

Lamar Odom had 19 points, nine rebounds and five assists, and Caron Butler scored 17 for the Heat as they avenged two lopsided losses to the Knicks earlier this season.

Michael Doleac scored 18 and Penny Hardaway 16 for the Knicks, whose reserves outscored their starters 39-38. Doleac and Hardaway each played 32 minutes while Keith Van Horn played 26 and Houston 23.

Cavaliers 95, 76ers 87

In Cleveland, Eric Williams scored 20 points, Dajuan Wagner added 17 and Cleveland finally slowed down Philadelphia star Allen Iverson in the fourth quarter.

Carlos Boozer had 15 points and 15 rebounds as the Cavs improved to 2-1 without rookie star LeBron James, who missed his third straight game with a sprained right ankle.

Iverson scored 32 points—21 in the third.

Glenn Robinson had 20 points for the injury-riddled Sixers, who have lost six of eight.

Hornets 98, Spurs 96

In San Antonio, Darrell Armstrong capped a season-high 35-point performance by hitting a 3-pointer from 9-meters (25 feet) with a second left to lead New Orleans to a come-from-behind victory over San Antonio.

Armstrong finished 11-for-21 from the field and was a perfect 9-for-9 from

Washington Wizards' Etan Thomas (36) scores on Indiana Pacers' Jermaine O'Neal, behind, during the first quarter Saturday, Jan. 24, 2004, in Washington. AP

the free throw line. He also nailed an 18-meter (53-foot) basket with a second left in the first half to close the Spurs' lead to 52-41.

The Spurs took an 18-point lead with five minutes left in the third, going up 69-51 after Tim Duncan dunked off an alley-oop pass from Manu Ginobili before New Orleans came back behind Armstrong.

Malik Rose led the Spurs with 20 points.

Lakers 93, Jazz 86

In Salt Lake City, Kobe Bryant returned from the injured list and scored 21 points to help the Los Angeles Lakers beat Utah to snap a nine-game road losing streak.

Bryant missed six games because of a sprained right shoulder. He felt good during the team shootaround earlier in the day and was activated.

Slava Medvedenko of the Ukraine tied his career high with 26 points for the Lakers, who let a 19-point lead slip to three twice before sealing their first road win since a 114-103 victory over Dallas on Dec. 4.

DeShawn Stevenson led Utah with 17 points.

SuperSonics 102, Clippers 97

In Seattle, Ray Allen scored 17 of his 41 points in the fourth quarter as Seattle took advantage of the Los Angeles Clippers' 4-for-19 3-point shooting.

The Sonics beat the Clippers for the third straight time this season, following two season-opening wins over Los Angeles in Japan in October.

Allen shot 14-for-23, including 6-for-10 from 3-point range, in finishing one point shy of his season best. Rashard Lewis, who had a career-high 50 points against the Clippers in the second game in Japan, added 15 points and Antonio Daniels came off the bench to score 14 for the Sonics.

The Clippers got 26 points and 16 rebounds from Elton Brand, 25 points and 10 rebounds from Maggette and 22 points from Quentin Richardson.

Mickelson, Triplett share Bob Hope lead

By **KEN PETERS**
AP SPORTS WRITER



LA QUINTA, Calif.

(AP)—Kirk Triplett shot a 9-under 63 Saturday, remaining bogey-free in the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic and tying Phil Mickelson for the lead at 26 under.

Triplett has 24 birdies, an eagle and 47 pars through 72 holes in the 90-hole tournament. Mickelson, making his 2004 debut, shot a 67 at Bermuda Dunes but still saw his two-shot lead evaporate. He won the Hope in 2002.

Kenny Perry, the 1995 champion, had consecutive eagles in his second 64 of the tournament and was one shot behind the co-leaders at 25-under 263.

Triplett who won the Reno-Tahoe Open last year for his second tour victory, holed a bunker shot for an eagle on No. 5 at Indian Wells Country Club, and made a twisting 20-foot birdie putt on No. 11 to highlight his fourth round.

John Daly had a rare double eagle on No. 2 at PGA West. Daly holed his second shot from 220 yards on the 514-

yard par 5. He finished the round with a 72 and was 15 under.

Jay Haas, the 1988 champion and runner-up to Mike Weir a year ago, was two shots off the pace after a 67.

Perry gained four strokes to par with his consecutive eagles on the par-5 fifth and sixth holes at La Quinta Country Club.

He hit a 4-iron that stopped 12 feet past the hole on the 516-yard No. 5 and drilled the putt.

He hit another fine approach, a 3-iron from 229 yards on the 527-yard sixth hole. He curved the ball to the right and around a bunker, and the ball rolled within 8 feet. He sank that putt to pick up four shots in two holes and go to 24 under at that point.

Perry acknowledged the applause from the gallery with a wave, and shook his head, grinning.

Five others, including 2000 winner Jesper Parnevik at 266, were within four shots of the leaders.

Mickelson, making his 2004 debut and looking for his first win in 18 months, was somewhat inconsistent during his fourth round - ranging from

a 40-foot birdie putt that he snaked into the hole to a drive into the water and a bogey on No. 10.

By comparison to Triplett's zero bogeys, Mickelson had four bogeys through the first 72 holes.

The first four rounds of the Hope are played as a pro-am on four courses, with the players alternating daily. The field was cut to the low-scoring 70 pros and ties for the final round at PGA West.

It took a 72-hole score of 277 - 11 under - or better to make the cut.

Scores traditionally are very low, with the desert courses relatively easy, and most of the par 5s reachable in two shots. Weir won at 30-under 330 last year, Mickelson also was 30 under a year earlier when he won a playoff with David Berganio Jr., and Joe Durant set a tour record for a 90-hole tournament with a 36-under 324 in 2001.

Phil Mickelson watches his drive from the 13th tee box Saturday, Jan. 24, 2004 at the Bermuda Dunes Country Club in Palm Desert, Calif., during the fourth round of the Bob Hope Chrysler tournament. AP



SPORTS BRIEFS

Table tennis singles tourney tomorrow

The Marianas Amateur Table Tennis Association is inviting the public to join the 2004 MATTA Open Singles Table Tennis Tournament.

The tournament will begin tomorrow and will continue throughout the rest of the month. It will be held Tuesday and Thursday nights at the multi-purpose room of the Gilbert C. Ada Ada Gymnasium.

The tournament format will be round-robin type of competition for the initial round where each participant will play all the other members of their division once.

Those who win the most games will move on to the elimination phase and playoffs.

Admission fee for the tournament will be \$10 per participant. Trophies will be presented to the winners of their respective divisions during an after-tournament dinner.

Children who wish to participate should inform their parents and ask for their consent. For more information please call Steve Lim at 483-7842.

21st Island Relay set for Dec. 28

Officials of the 21st Annual Christmas Island Relay announced that this year's 13.7-mile team event is set to take place during the early morning hours of December 28.

The starting point of the course will be at the Pacific Islands Club south parking lot. Participants will then head north and work their way to the finish line at the Last Command Post in Marpi.

Interested teams may register at the starting point of the race, which will be at the Pacific Islands Club south parking lot in San Antonio. Registration begins at 5:15am.

Each team, which consists of five members, must switch runners every mile. It is also required that each team has at least one female participant or a participant who is under the age of 16 or in the senior division. Prior to competing, all teams must pay a fee of \$25.

For more information about the 21st Annual Christmas Island Relay, please contact Elias Rangamar at 234-1001 or 1002.

Budweiser Cup on Jan. 12

Officials of the much-awaited Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands Budweiser Cup have decided to push back the kick of date of the 2003 island-wide men's basketball season to January 12 of next year.

So far, 10 teams have shown interest in participating in the league. Only eight, however, are confirmed to battle for the championship crown and the \$1,000 grand prize that goes along with it. Also at stake are the \$300 prize for the runner-up and the \$200 award for the second runner-up.

Each team interested in taking part in the season is required to pay an entrance fee of \$900 that must be payable to BANMI.

Aside from the prizes awarded to the top three finishers, other prizes may be claimed through a half-court shot competition and a three-point contest.

For more information, please contact Rangamar at 664-2500 or Abner Venus at 234-5911.

SPG Council launches logo contest

The South Pacific Games Council Executive Board has announced that it will be selecting a new logo for the SPG Council. The winning logo will be selected from designs submitted through the national sports federations represented on the Council.

The contest is open to everyone. The general public is invited to submit design proposals. The Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association will select one or more of the designs submitted to it, for transmission to the SPG Council.

All entries should be submitted to NMASA President Michael A. White. The selection of a new design will take place at the SPG Council assembly in Palau next year.

For further information, please contact White at telephone 234-6547.

Sequioco tops Tuesday pool

By MARK RABAGO
REPORTER



Boyet Sequioco put together another perfect run last Tuesday to win the Round Two 8-Ball Fun Tournament that evening at the pioneering sports bar.

The Olango, Zambales native triumphed three straight times after getting a bye in the opening round then turned back a courageous effort by Ike Celis to win the Tuesday 8-ball plum.

Sequioco first victimized Cherish Reyes in the second round before getting the better of Celis in the next round. He then slammed perennial pool winner Manny Mariano in the winners' bracket final to secure the first finals berth and the all-important twice-to-beat advantage.

Celis, for his part, had to work double time after being relegated to losers' bracket play by the crafty Sequioco.

The silver-haired Celis rebounded quickly and nicely by first beating Round Two owner Don Pangelinan. He then eliminated top lady player Rosemarie Moses-Arnold before moving on to the losers' bracket final opposite Mariano.

The outing against Mariano was where Celis truly shone, as the veteran pool player shocked the Filipino cue artist and



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left: Third place Manny Mariano, Round Two 8-Ball Fun Tournament champion Boyet Sequioco, and runner-up Ike Celis.

arranged a championship round meeting with third round conqueror Sequioco.

Unfortunately for Celis his sparkling run apparently ran out in the deciding match against Sequioco, allowing the Hafa Adai security guard to come away with the weekly pool title. He won a handsome trophy and the \$40 top prize for his efforts.

Celis settled for the \$25 runner-up purse, while Mariano took home the \$15 third place

prize. All three men also got souvenir caps from Pacific Trading Co.

Other billiard players that graced the Tuesday 8-ball competition were Gary Ridley, Lars and Palacios.

The Round Two 8-Ball Tournament is held every Tuesday starting at 8pm and has an entry fee of \$10.

Round Two also regularly hosts two other pool tournaments through the course

of the week. Its winner-take-all pool tournament is held every Sunday starting at 1pm and costs \$5 to join.

On Thursdays, Round Two holds the exciting Miller Lite Invitational 8-Ball Tournament starting at 8pm. Entry fee is \$15 on regular days but goes up to \$25 every last Thursday of the month.

For more information on Round Two's tournaments, please contact Don Pangelinan at 234-6930.

ROCBALL

From Page 28

WATTS, wrote that that the program, which features shows on different sports from around the world, would like to attain footage, pictures, and information of Rocball for airing.

Feger also confirmed that he will send a couple of videotapes, information about the history of the sport, rules, and several articles and news clippings to Chimienti.

Eurosport reaches over 95 million homes in 54 countries.

Also being attracted to the sport is Brian Meredith, an operation manager for CrackerJax, a sports-theme

amusement park in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Meredith stated in his letter to Feger that he is currently searching for ways to make their three volleyball courts useful, and was intrigued after coming across some information about Rocball while browsing through the Internet.

Meredith added that he is trying to modify the courts to Rocball standards and is working towards starting a Rocball league.

"I can't believe that nobody in America plays this sport," Meredith stated.

Last year, Feger scheduled a special match featuring 2001 and 2002 champions DX and Jammers, which was taped and

sent to the Fox Sports Show "You Gotta See This." Fox Sports Show's Associate Producer Eric Hopkins expressed his interest in the sport. Camera crews were set up at courtside and on the roof of the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

He also sent a couple of videotapes, written information, and graphics to the Rocball Federation of India.

In related news, the World Organized Rocball Inter-scholastic and Community League's 2004 season is set to get underway on January 12.

Teams will engage in several practice rounds prior to seeing battle in the preliminary rounds, which is expected to kick off just

a couple of weeks later.

All interested players are encouraged to begin organizing squads for the league, which unlike other sporting events, doesn't require an entrance fee.

All matches will be played at the Marianas High School Green Court. Should Mother Nature interrupt with wet showers, matches will be played at the school's gym.

Feger began organizing and writing about the sport while in Japan in 1979. After two years of experimenting, the sport finally progressed into a tournament in 1983.

For more information, please contact Feger at 664-3810 or 288-8722.

LOVE

From Page 28

on the next two holes, then easily reached the par-5 11th with a 5-iron to set up his fourth straight birdie.

"I had my pompoms out, cheering him on," Woods said. "I told him on the 10th tee I was two ahead. He said, 'How's that?' I told him I was getting a stroke a hole."

Love smiled when asked about Woods' comments.

"I didn't want to stick my hand in the cage and ask him if he wanted strokes," Love said.

Indeed, Love put seven shots between him and Woods over the first nine holes, and it left himself in great position to become the

first repeat winner of the Target World Challenge since Woods created it five years ago.

Love won in 2000 with a 64 in the final round.

It would be a great way to end his best season on tour. Love won four times, and no victory bigger than his final-round 64 at The Players Championship on a cold, windy day at Sawgrass.

While this tournament only counts in the bank - \$1.2 million of the \$5 million purse going to the winner - a victory would be meaningful coming against a 16-man field of high-ranked players and three of the four major champions.

Plus, Love has played the last two rounds with Woods, a

situation that in the past hasn't allowed him to play his best.

Love has worked all year to worry about only his own game. In fact, he was having dinner with friends Friday night when they told him to beat Woods.

"K.J. is the guy to beat right now," Love said. "People don't see it the way we do. You've got to beat the golf course."

Harrington missed a 3-foot par putt on the final hole for a 70 and was in third place at 211, six shots behind. Masters champion Mike Weir, who opened with a 75, had a 3-under 69 and was at 212.

Choi is making his first appearance in the final event of the year, and would like nothing

better to end his season with a victory - even though it doesn't count in the record books and won't get him back to Kapalua.

"It would be even better ... because of the field," Choi said.

Catching up to Love could require a great round, especially the way Love is playing. The calm, warmer conditions allowed the ball to travel farther and the power hitters to play more aggressively.

Love's only bogey came on a three-putt from 15 feet, when his eyes saw only the hole and not the speed of the putt; he ran it 8 feet by and missed the par putt.

"Other than that, I felt like I could make birdie on every hole," Love said. "And I almost did."

IT'S CABALEN

From Page 28

fouling out.

In the first game, the UFO All-Stars finally notched a win after beating Bicol Express-RNV Construction 53-44.

First Game

UFO All-Stars 53—Mendiola 20, Malasarte 13, Pardinan 10, Gatdula 6, Canedo 4.

Bicol-RNV Construction 44—Jugos 15, Aldan 10, Abadilla 6,

Lopez 6, Miday 5, Mumar 2.

Second Game

Cabalen-RP Construction 121—Mendoza 25, Delos Reyes 35, Ocampo 13, Alipio 12, Arnedo 12, Jo. Gatdula 6, Magcalas 5, Sinca 3, Barbo 2.

SIP-Verizon 103—R. Alegre 19, Mendoza 18, Guiab 14, Factor 13, Rapanut 13, Villacrusis 9, T. Alegre 7, Tamondong 5, Flores 3, Garcia 2.

Scoring by quarters: 24-27, 59-50, 90-79, 121-103.



Trail Blazers defeat the Lakers, 112-108

Damon Stoudamire hit two 3-pointers in the final minutes and the Portland Trail Blazers handed the Los Angeles Lakers their second loss in two nights with a 112-108 victory Saturday night.

25

Saipan Tribune Sports

Sequioco tops Tuesday pool

Boyet Sequioco put together another perfect run last Tuesday to win the Round Two 8-Ball Fun Tournament that evening at the pioneering sports bar.

27



28 MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2003

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

It's Cabalen against Visminda

By MARK RABAGO
REPORTER

RP Construction dethrones SIP, 121-103

Cabalen-RP Construction reaffirmed their mastery over SIP-Verizon dethroning the three-time defending champion with a 121-103 rout Sunday night that secured them a finals ticket opposite Visminda-Country House in the 2003 UFO Miller Lite Cup championship.

The Transamerica-backed squad atoned for a shaky start, which had them trail SIP-Verizon 27-24 after the opening quarter, with a terrific second quarter.

Big man Ronald Delos Reyes, the goat in Cabalen's 103-108 loss to Visminda last week, came back strong and hit a couple of triples in the second stanza to start the fireworks for Cabalen.

Youthful center Ryan Mendoza, meanwhile, complemented Delos Reyes' sharpshooting ways by scoring 12 points from point blank range also in the second quarter.

The combination of efficient outside shooting and strong inside play translated to a 59-50 halftime advantage for Cabalen.

SIP-Verizon, whose players

came in late due to a mix-up in scheduling, continued to take on water and struggled mightily in the second half.

Cabalen's aggressive game had their opponents on the defensive during the early part of the third period. Another 3-pointer by Delos Reyes at the 8:03 mark of the quarter gave Cabalen its biggest lead so far at 68-54.

A few plays later, Mendoza struck again on the inside to pad their edge further at 72-54 with 6:47 remaining in the period.

Following a putback by Delos Reyes on a miss free throw off a 3-point opportunity by Mendoza, the score stood at 89-68 with less than two minutes left in the third.

But SIP-Verizon was far from gone and retaliated with an 11-3 burst to close the quarter that cut their deficit to 90-79.

Cabalen's Mendoza also chipped in to SIP-Verizon's cause, inadvertently making a layup on SIP-Verizon's basket after an inbound play following a timeout with 31 ticks to go.

The big end-game rally, however, didn't materialize for SIP-Verizon as Cabalen

thwarted all attempts at an uprising and maintained their healthy lead all throughout the final quarter.

There were still a lot of scary moments though. With Cabalen up 96-84, SIP-Verizon forward Gary Rapanut missed a routine layup that could've cut the lead to 10 points.

At the 5:31 mark of the game Edsel Mendoza missed two tries from the free throw line and in the succeeding SIP-Verizon offensive, newly arrived Leo Factor missed the bonus free throw on a 3-point play that could've slashed Cabalen's lead again to 10 points.

With SIP-Verizon still within striking distance swingman Junar Guiab was hit with his fifth personal foul with 4:05 to go. Shortly after Factor followed him to the showers.

Playing-coach Rick Alegre's coast-to-coast layup made it 108-97 with 2:52 left in the game but that appeared to be SIP-Verizon's last gasp as Cabalen went on a 9-2 tear highlighted by an off-balanced 3-point play

by Randy Arnedo that, for all intents and purpose, sealed the game at 117-99 with 1:33 remaining.

Mendoza earned Miller Lite MVP of the Game honors after scoring

35 points, which was the same output submitted by Delos Reyes. Veterans Alex Ocampo, Jun Alipio added 13 and 12 points, respectively.

Rick Alegre topscored for SIP-Verizon with 19 points. Edsel Mendoza chipped in 16 points and Guiab 14 before

See ITS CABALEN on Page 27



Rocball gains interest yet again

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER



Saipan's very own sport, Rocball, is steadily gaining more interest from the outside world.

This was learned late last week after founder and organizer James Feger announced that he has received e-mails from a couple organizations, Eurosport TV and a sports amusement park in Arizona, interested in gaining more information about the sport.

Eurosport, the most widely available sports channel in Europe, has made contact with Feger and has shown interest in learning more about the sport for future broadcasting.

In an e-mail letter to Feger, Pablo Chimienti of Eurosport's weekly program

See ROCBALL on Page 27

Love pulls away from Tiger at Sherwood

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP GOLF WRITER



THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (AP)—Davis Love III made four straight birdies to leave Tiger Woods in the dust and pull away from a world-class field Saturday, finishing with a 9-under 63 to build a three-shot lead in the Target World Challenge.

Despite a bogey on the par-3 17th, Love tied the tournament record set last year by Pdraig Harrington in the third round. Harrington built a record six-shot lead and hung on to win against Woods.

Love, at 11-under 205, only had a three-shot margin over K.J. Choi (65), although he won't have to worry about Woods.

As most of the leaders were posting birdies on a sunny, benign afternoon at Sherwood, the tournament host gave up ground with a three-putt bogey



Tiger Woods reacts to his approach shot on the 18th hole during the third round of the Target World Challenge, Saturday, Dec. 13, 2003, in Thousand Oaks, Calif.

on No. 3 and then hit his tee shot into the water for a bogey on the next hole.

Woods lost all hope on the final hole, hitting off the pine

straw and coming up well short, into the water, and he had to make a 15-footer for bogey. He had a 72 and was nine shots back at 214.

Meanwhile, Love played some of his best golf since early in the year. "I was confident all day," Love said. "I'm getting more and more comfortable playing with Tiger and around the lead."

Love was tied with Choi and Justin Leonard when his 4-iron on the difficult par-3 8th climbed just enough to hop into the fringe and stop about 6 feet above the hole for one of only two birdies in the round.

Love holed putts of 20 feet and 15 feet for birdies

See LOVE on Page 27

